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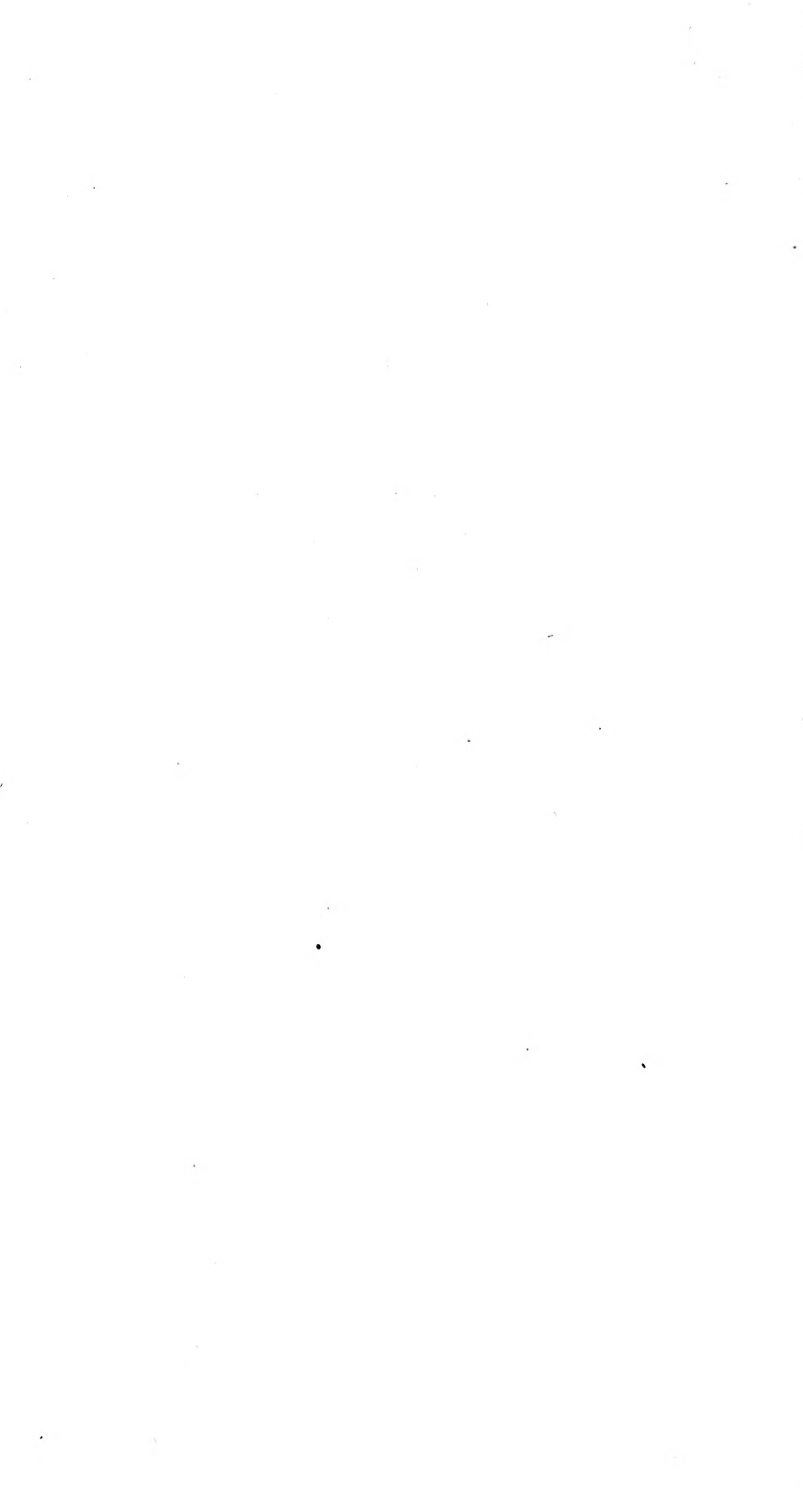


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# THE A C T R E S S

## OF THE *P R E S E N T D A Y.*

---

“ Know you not, *Mistress*, to some kind of Men  
Their Graces serve them but as Enemies ?  
No more do yours ; your Virtues, gentle *Mistress*,  
Are sanctified and holy Traitors to you.  
Oh ! what a World is this ! when, what is comely  
Envenoms *her* that bears it——.”

AS YOU LIKE IT.

---

“ Be thou as chaste as Ice, as pure as *Snow*, thou shalt not  
escape Calumny.”

HAMLET.

---

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JAMES HARPER, 46, FLEET-STREET.

1817.

**W. Flint, Printer, Old Bailey, London.**

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THE  
ACTRESS  
OF THE  
PRESENT DAY.

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CHAPTER XXV.

MARY from an amiable weakness, and a too conscientious wish to discharge *literally* the obligation of the inconsiderate and hasty vow she had made, persevered in her determination to take the infant with her, whithersoever she might go; the arguments of her friends, on whose judgment and experience she had ever hitherto implicitly relied, and cogent as she allowed them to be, could not satisfy her scrupulous mind, that any, even the slightest deviation from the rash vow, would not be an atrocious crime, and an absolute violation of the sacred duty she had imposed upon herself, compared to which all selfish considerations appeared of minor importance. She had been calum-

niated, and her conduct questioned, without the smallest ground or appearances to justify suspicion, and the world could do no more, even now; "but experience taught her," she said, "to despise the censures of a misjudging world, whose opinion was founded wholly on caprice; that she would take care so to dispose the child, that censure should not reach her." She acknowledged, nor doubted of the care Mrs. Forester had promised, nor of the sedulous attention of old Ann; but disapproved of its being reared by *hand*, and therefore a *wet-nurse* should be provided; but old Ann should accompany her, and superintend its management. She neither could, nor would trust the infant to a mercenary nurse, unless her old and faithful domestic would undertake that trouble, which the old woman most cheerfully accepted. All this feasible plan, the suggestion of tender affection, and a religious adherence to her plighted oath, could not remove from Mrs. Forester, Mr. Percy, nor Mrs. Mildmay, strong apprehensions for the precipitate step she had adopted.

Finding their remonstrances of no efficient weight, against the reasons which appeared

to Mary so very cogent, Mr. Percy gravely replied, in a tone where pity was more blended than reproof: "Since, Miss Irwin, you are thus resolved, contrary to the judgment and advice of your best friends; you can only have yourself to accuse, for the danger your peace of mind is likely to experience; and which I shall never cease to pray, may be averted; trusting, the inconveniences which must necessarily arise from loading yourself with this incumbrance may *timely* awaken you, before more *serious* consequences ensue. We have only to assure you, that we shall readily receive the charge from your hands, whenever you are so disposed; for, as your present obstinacy springs solely from *pious* motives, which all must honour and respect, we do not feel that *hurt* at this rejection of our maturer counsel, which otherwise we might have experienced."

Mrs. Mildmay, notwithstanding the general placidity of her disposition, hoped reflection would banish her romantic scruples; and that she would, before she set forward to her fresh engagement, alter her present ridiculous resolve, so perfectly childish, and inconsiderate; "otherwise," added she, "I

shall conclude, you have brought away with you, some of my perverse brother's spirit of contradiction : this is scarcely bearable sometimes even in him, who from his years and independence, may be allowed some eccentricities ; but such pertinacity is no proof of sense, believe me, child ; and it becomes you for some years at least, to yield up your own opinion, however right you may suppose it, to the superior judgment of those whom you have proved your friends ; and who can have no motive to oppose your intention, but a clearer view of the real consequences, and of which you seem to form no adequate estimate."

" The *long* experience Mary has derived from being so many *months* her own mistress, and judge of her own actions," observed Mrs. Forester, " must certainly render her competent to act for herself in some degree : particularly as she can now *afford* to indulge her *frolic*, I will call it by no harsher name. So we will drop the subject, but I have only to observe to you, Mary, that *prosperity* in your profession is very precarious ; that should an unmerited reverse of fortune cloud your future prospects, and you required our aid, we never could



withhold it from you ; but none of your friends, I am certain, will step forward in future ; while you load yourself with a heavy and unnecessary charge ; which those friends, whose advice you slight, would willingly prevent you from incurring."

The calmness with which these words were accompanied, rendered them sharper than were they uttered with more asperity. She felt hurt at the *coolness* in her benefactress's manner ; and though now was the proper time for her to forego her own ideas, and coincide with her friends, a mistaken pride, and the dread of violating her oath, or of being thought *wavering*, kept poor Mary silent. She thought, were she now to acquiesce, it might be laid to a *mercenary* motive ; and this unfortunately prevented her yielding to the wiser suggestions of experience ; for, to say the truth, *prudence* whispered her, they were right. She only modestly observed, " if ever she saw the slightest reason to believe she acted wrongly in this instance, she should immediately atone for her error, by removing the cause, but hoped their fears were groundless."

The conversation now turned on her unfortunate aunt, Mrs. Gordon, whose state

of health, and ruined fortune, claimed the compassionate Mary's tenderest sympathy. She ventured to say, she would wait on her aunt, and see how she was disposed to receive her; that though *she* had forgotten the ties of blood, her present state required that her surviving *niece* should not; that the interest of her money now in the hands of the worthy Quaker, Nathan Barclay, should be appropriated to her aunt's use.

"I will not oppose you, my dear," said Mrs. Forester, "in this wish and intention: it is praiseworthy; the trifling interest can be of no material use to you; but its appropriation to your aunt, may render her less dependent, and make her better treated, where she at present resides; for with all their outward *sanctity*, I fear too many of the sect adore *Mammon* in their hearts."

"You are, I hope, Madam," said Mr. Percy, "too *severe* in your observation. Heaven forbid all were hypocrites. I know many very worthy conscientious people belonging to them; and Mr. Newburn, their new minister, I am credibly informed, is a most exemplary man of practical piety. There is no religion or sect clear from hypocrites and impostors. Should our established

church suffer, ought it to be arraigned, because incumbered with a few overgrown and indolent pluralists, or careless or unworthy ministers? No, surely. Would to God, that many of our divines would imitate *their* Preachers' example in many respects, at least in their unwearied zeal and exertions in their calling! We should then have fewer complaints, and less seceding and innovation."

In a few days, Mary went with Mrs. Forester, and paid her respects to her aunt, who received her with more complacency than heretofore. "I am glad to see you are come back, and have left the horrid course of life you were involved in; it is never, I trust, too late to repent." Mary bowed, and made no reply. The aunt proceeded: "Our people talk strange things of that good man Solomon Saintbury and of poor Hester; but I won't believe a word; it cannot be he was such a vile impostor; he was a very industrious man, and if he failed in business, did not your father do the same? If I am a sufferer, as they say, it will be only for a short time, till the cloud blows over; when he will come back, and settle

with all his creditors, and shame these false reports."

Mary and her friend, perceiving the old lady's rooted delusion, smiled, and turning to the business that brought them, Mrs. Forester said, " Mary, Madam, understanding the present embarrassment of your affairs, has come to offer you a small annuity of fifteen pounds, arising from the interest of her little moiety : she hopes you will accept it, till better times enable you to do without it."

" Ay, she is a good girl," said Mrs. Gordon, " and has but that one fault, a love for wicked plays, which turned my heart against her ; but I am overjoyed she sees her error, and will now go, I hope, to reputable service. A dry crust, earned by scrubbing and rubbing, is far better than the fine flaunting robes and dainty living of such a profane set ! Heaven preserve you, child, from the power of Satan !"

" *Amen !*" was all Mary's answer, when the Rev. Mr. Newburn was announced. He politely bowed to the ladies, and approaching Mrs. Gordon, took her hand tenderly and respectfully. " I understand, Madam,"

said the new preacher, “ that you have been a principal benefactor to our society ; that a large portion of your money vested in the funds, has been sold, and laid out in erecting a chapel for the services of the chosen disciples of our Divine Master. This laudable purpose being effected, and I having legally purchased this building and the lease from its late proprietor ; and having likewise reason to believe your pious zeal has produced a too credulous reliance upon an unworthy man ; I, from a wish that such exemplary goodness should not suffer, have mentioned your case to some of our principal leaders and members, and we have entered into a liberal subscription, which with the profits arising from the pews, shall be appropriated to your use, during your natural life. We cannot permit so zealous an advocate for the advancement of the Gospel, to suffer injury in the glorious cause, betrayed by her religious confidence in a wretch, who has disgraced the sacred mission of Evangelic Ministry. Make your mind easy, Madam, as to worldly matters ; the comfortable experience you feel of Heavenly promises, must ever support and strengthen you, during your temporary so-

jour here, and a blessed immortality, you may be confident, awaits you."

Mary, perceiving her aunt wholly occupied in attending to this respectable and reverend friend, rose, and kissing her hand, bade her good-day; and making an obeisance to Mr. Newburn, she and Mrs. Forester, left her aunt and him together.

"I am very happy," said Mary, "that these people have been so considerate. I begin to have a better opinion of them. I like this Mr. Newburn: he seems a plain, honest man, of polite address, and none of that abominable, disgusting cant about him."

"You may now," replied her friend, "rest satisfied, that all your aunt's wants will be amply supplied by her own society, from whom she would much rather receive obligations, than even from you: and to say the truth, it is no more than an act of justice, that the poor woman should not be injured. Yes, I approve of Mr. Newburn's conduct much; and we will some day go and hear him preach."

Mary, however, having held out to her aunt, the promise of a small annuity, could not reconcile it to her mind to swerve from

it ; so scrupulous was she in this and every other respect wherein her word was once given, that she deemed the non-fulfilment nothing short of absolute perjury. We confess we admire the purity of her principles, though we lament the unnecessary rashness of those promises, and her pertinacity to their adherence.

Mary therefore took an opportunity of waiting on Mr. Barclay, the Quaker, and acquainted him with her wish. When this gentleman saw her, he unbent the usual solemnity of his muscles, and received her with a complacent smile. " I am glad to see thee : thy looks show that thy abode among strangers hath been prosperous, as to bodily welfare, young maiden, and not disadvantageous to thy temporal concerns ; and this request of thine, in behalf of thy near relative Hester Gordon, with which I shall comply, convinces me of thy prosperity. I hope it may continue. Dost thou want any monies for thy immediate use ? I have twenty pounds at thy service, for thy dividend has amounted to more than three hundred pounds considerably, upon a minute investigation, and final arrangement with thy father's creditors."

Mary returned her grateful thanks, but declined his friendly offer. "Strange things have happened since thy absence, damsel; *saints* have proved *sinner*s, and outward sanctity has become the jest of scoffers! Truly, I am not surprised; but," added the Quaker, "thou shouldest be thankful thou hast escaped falling into the tempter's snare: neither shouldest thou now grieve that thy sister hath paid the debt of her indiscretion; so, cheer thee, good Mary, that thou art more particularly favoured. Dost thou tarry with thy friends in future *here*, or return to thy situation?"

"The illness of my unfortunate sister alone brought me to see her, Sir, and I shall return to my business very shortly."

"'Tis well," said he with a nod of approbation; "I approve of thy resolve; industry never toileth in vain, and I wish thee health to continue in thy laudable pursuits. Fare thee well."

Mary having politely thanked this worthy man, for his past and present friendship, took her leave. In a few days, she took an opportunity of speaking to old Ann, to look out for a healthy young woman, as a wet-nurse for the child; one, who had no



objection to travel occasionally. Ann promised her so to do. "But, by my truly, mistress," said the old woman, "it will be no easy task to procure one, to leave her own home and bairns perhaps; howsomdever I will look out; tho'f I can rear the baby for that matter well enough by hand, as I did poor Miss Hester, Heaven have mercy on her sinful sowl, for she was from the birth a cross toad, and never would take kindly to the mother's breast, as *you* did; to be sure, as I may say, I bean't grown younger: and have no great liking for its father, that's the truth on't; but that's neither here nor there. I will see for a proper nurse, as you require, Miss; and I can then have an eye over it myself, and see she does it justice; and at the same time puddle about in my little way, and attend to your consarns, for I won't earn my living for nought, I assure you, my dear child: no, no, Heaven be praised, there is no occasion for that."

Accordingly Ann in less than a week found out the wife of a soldier, who had just buried her infant: she was a fresh, comely young woman, without incumbrance, and very readily undertook the charge: every

thing was settled, and the infant immediately delivered to her care, and she and old Ann quitted Mrs. Forester's during Mary's remaining stay at Slope Lawn Cottage. The old woman soon settled her little concerns, and was delighted to think she should spend her remaining years in the service of her dear young mistress, and Mary was equally pleased at the thoughts of having a long tried faithful confident, whom she could trust, and with whom she could occasionally consult, and who had lived in the family many years before she was born.

Mrs. Forester, who had seen the young woman, whom old Ann had recommended, hoped she was a prudent, discreet person, and not given to chattering; and as a few idle gossips in the neighbourhood might raise unfounded reports, and fill the young nurse's mind, relative to the infant's birth, with stories which may make her dissatisfied with the charge she had undertaken; when she saw the old woman she spoke to that effect: "Who recommended this nurse to you, Ann?"

"Why, saving your presence, Madam," replied Ann, "the luckiest chance in the

world. I spoke to my niece, the carpenter's wife, with whom I live, to look out for a sober, steady, young woman, as my young mistress had a friend who died in child-bed, and had bequeathed the infant to her care: for I would not for the varsal world have it known it was Miss Hester's. And so she recommended this person, who it seems is wife to a soldier now abroad, and in the same regiment with young Master Edward. Poor thing! she buried a fine girl about five months old, not above a fortnight ago. She is a nice, healthy, sprightly, and chatty body, and will prove a good nurse, I warrant. It is nothing to her whose child it is: and she shall know nothing from me, depend upon it: all she has to do, is to rear it properly, as I told her, and to ax no questions that don't consarn her."

"True, nurse," said Mrs. Forester; "and if she should prove too curious, she must be exchanged for one more discreet."

"Ay to be sure, Madam," answered Ann, "sarvice, as I may say, is no inheritance, and many would be glad of her place; but as she now knows her young mistress's brother is a Captain in her husband's regi-

ment, she will be very careful to keep her place and do her duty ; so I think."

Mary was much pleased with the account Ann gave of the woman having a husband in the same regiment with her brother, as the knowledge of this would secure her attention and circumspection.

She now sat down, by the advice of her benefactress to write an answer to her brother's letters: she confessed the reluctance she felt in avowing the line of life she had adopted, particularly after the severe reflections he had cast on the profession, and the strong repugnance he had shown to her pursuing it ; above all, she was at a loss how to satisfy her brother with respect to Major Emerson, for whom she entertained not the least predilection, and nothing more than a grateful sense of the preference he had shown her. She knew her brother to be high-minded, and she doubted not, but the Major and he were by this time intimate friends ; her positive rejection of a man so highly approved by him would, she had every reason to think, meet his lasting displeasure, and be attributed to an unworthy attachment formed elsewhere: and as to Hester, she could not bring herself to ex-

plain the truth, knowing how deeply it would wound his honour and his feelings.

Involved in this perplexity, she earnestly besought Mrs. Forester's counsel how she should proceed. That worthy and amiable lady owned that her present task was most arduous ; for, let her soften matters as much as she could, the intelligence she had to communicate, she justly perceived, would in no respect prove pleasing and satisfactory.

“ Take your brother's last letter and read it over attentively, and try how you can parry his opinions. I by no means wish you to assert what is not ; that, I know, is not in your nature ; but there is a *necessity* to conceal the *cause* of your sister's death ; time will, I fear, discover it ; but really, child, I know not how you can well reject so eligible a proposal as Major Emerson's, unless indeed, your heart is *otherwise* disposed ; but that you know best.”

This last observation brought an additional glow into poor Mary's cheeks. She declared, she could make no such avowal ; and said, she would consider well, before she committed her thoughts to paper : which when she had so done, she would thank her friend for her opinion, before she sealed it.

Mary then, in pursuance of Mrs. Forester's advice, brought out her brother's letters, and likewise her friend's last answer to her. Having digested both, she penned the following to Captain Irwin :

Slope Lawn Cottage.

“ My dear Edward,

“ Think not your sister unkind ; nor attribute my long silence to want of that strong affection which your absence, so far from diminishing, hourly serves to increase. Much as I miss the protection of a brother, I am not so selfish, to wish you to relinquish your military career, wherein reputation and advancement go hand in hand, and which have so fortunately attended you. May that Power, who has so gloriously crowned our arms, continue his protection towards you, and add more laurels to my Edward's brow ? Your advancement must ever constitute my glory and my happiness ; and I should disgrace our father's memory, and be unworthy of being sister to a gallant soldier, did any effeminate weakness or fears, though incidental to my sex, tend in the least degree to damp that ardour inherent in your breast, and which it will be ever my pride rather to cherish and encourage, than disapprove.

“ As to myself, I am, thank Heaven, perfectly in health ; though I have undergone some perplexities, since our dear father’s decease : thrown suddenly on a wide world ; and reduced by villainy from affluence, to a state of dependencé ; it required a much wiser and more experienced head than I can boast, to judge for the best. Aware of my own incompetency to decide, I consulted with those dear and true friends of our honoured and deceased parents, and whose kindness for my future welfare now rose to parental solicitude and affection ; you cannot but know, *whom* I mean ; you must be convinced, that Mr. Percy, your revered tutor and chosen friend of our father, and Mrs. Forester, the amiable and intimate associate of our sainted mother, would never sanction any step of mine, derogatory to *their* memories, and inconsistent with their own rigid notions of propriety.

“ I commend your sagacity, my dear brother, in discovering the profession I have, with their concurrence, chosen, and it was never my intention to conceal it from you, through any dread or shame of avowal. Had I or those dear friends entertained those prejudices against it, which you, with

many others, ungenerously harbour, I should have felt an equal abhorrence with yourself in embracing a life, opposite to their ideas of rectitude, and to which no particular propensity on *my* part impelled me. Therefore I openly confess, the intelligence you have received, is, in this respect, correct.

“ You surely will allow, my brother, that a woman *may* continue virtuous, though exposed to temptation ; and that even the *stage*, degrading as it appears in your judgment, at present, contains many truly estimable characters ; of principles and conduct unimpeachable. This, I myself have often heard you declare, and combat the vulgar opinion : whence, therefore, arises your present seeming inconsistency ? Alas ! my dear brother, young as I am, and hazardous and dangerous as you deem *my* exposed situation. I have lived to be a melancholy witness, that *no* situation, *no rank*, *no education* will secure a woman from error, if her principles are unfortunately too easily perverted. You will confess this observation to be just, and Major Emerson, your friend, will own its truth, that the *profession* in itself cannot sully the reputation ; but that *conduct* stamps the *worth* or degradation of the fe-



male character. Assure that gentleman of my unalterable determination. I entertain for him the highest *esteem* and gratitude for the preference he has honoured me with ; which preference from such a man, will, I hope, convince you, Edward, that I have resisted temptation, and I trust I am *still* worthy to be considered as a sister ; but *recent* circumstances have occurred : *I* must not, dare not mention them. Time will, I fear, too soon acquaint you ; which must render every proposal of such a nature, wholly ineligible.

“ You ask me of our sister Hester. Alas ! my brother, poor Hester is no more ! it is now three weeks since I followed her to our family grave ; her’s and our aunt Gordon’s religious principles were perverted by the inflated zeal of Solomon Saintbury, whom you remember. This *wretch*, the greatest hypocrite and impostor that ever disgraced the doctrines of Christianity, not content with an absolute sway over the consciences of his deluded followers, contrived to get possession of their property. Our unfortunate aunt is ruined : she sold out of the funds, and entrusted her *all* in the hands of this deceiver ; Hester did the same.

On the death of his old wife, he pretended a serious attachment to our sister, but to finish his character, he *privately* married Miss *Steel*, an heiress of five thousand pounds, and more property: he no sooner got possession of these different sums, than he took *French leave*, and has, ere this, arrived in *America*; leaving his credulous dupes in a state of beggary and distraction, and all his creditors in the forlorn hope.

“ This shock struck to the heart of our unfortunate sister, whose health had been for some months on the decline; her temper, never the most amiable, her brain affected with fanaticism, rendered her the immediate victim of despondence and despair; from which no persuasions nor arguments could rouse her; and, too true, she died in a state little short of absolute *distraction*! a melancholy instance of deluded and misplaced confidence! Let *this* account, dear Edward, for my reluctance in writing; but judging my silence would be imputed to the wrong cause, I have ventured to communicate the tidings. Sad indeed, they are! but we must submit to the will of Heaven; and resignation to its Supreme decrees is our indispensable duty.

“ If my dear brother’s aversion to the line of life I have not *inconsiderately* adopted, be so unalterable, that I must risk his paternal affection by perseverance in it, be so good, in your superior wisdom, to point out any other profession, half so profitable or advantageous ; or what may render me independent in so short a time. The talents which I am allowed in some measure to possess, have hitherto met with the warmest approbation and encouragement. I am advanced to a much superior situation ; and affluence and independence, Edward, generally accompany advancement : is it not so in the army ? Why not in other professions ? The stage affords to talent the rapid acquisition of fortune and of fame ; they are inseparable, if prudence be combined with conspicuous talent. I do not say, *I* shall be a favourite of the blind goddess : but if industry will entitle me to a share, a *moderate* share of her favours, I will endeavour to deserve them, by every laudable effort ; and above all, by never forfeiting my *own* esteem, or giving cause to a beloved brother to withdraw his love from his ever affectionate sister,

“ MARY IRWIN.”

“ Mrs. Forester and Mr. Percy beg to be remembered to you in the most cordial and sincerest manner. They both rejoice at your promotion, and hope to salute you personally by the title of Major on your return. I hope to have that honour, if your *honour* will permit me; *but* as an actress you will *disown* me. Recal that hasty word, dear Edward, and point out and fix me in a respectable profession with equal prospects, and no theatric mania shall oppose your wishes, or compel you, through *mistaken pride*, to renounce a sister, whom you once so dearly loved. Mrs. Forester has taken the pen from me.”

*Mrs. Forester writes.*

“ Yes, my dear Edward, I have; for I think Mary has been too particular and minute in her own *vindication* as she calls it. I am really very angry with you, Sir, and so is Mr. Percy. Could you suppose we would suffer her to enter upon any line or profession, which we thought repugnant to propriety? *No*. She has consulted us in every material transaction, and unless in *one* instance recently, has implicitly abided by our opinion on all occasions. So, none of your military airs, I beg, nor attempt to bring

either your sister or me to a *court-martial*, nor try us by any of *your sumptuary* laws. We will not allow their competency. Seriously, Edward, I wish you could witness Mary's excellence and rising merit ; so conspicuous, that she has already gained the respect and patronage of some noble and distinguished personages, equally esteemed for their virtues, as their taste and judgment. Suspend then your sentence, till you *see* her. Poor Hester has been released from a world of misery, for no other prospect was before her, and is, I doubt not, happy. Your aunt, likewise, is not long for this world : it will be a happy release. Farewell ! Leave Mary to *our* counsel and direction ; and don't distress the poor girl with your rigid *military* notions of propriety. I salute the tip of your epaulet, noble captain ; and believe me, your very

“ Affectionate old friend,

“ ELIZABETH FORESTER.”

Having dispatched this important packet to Captain Irwin, Mary passed the remainder of her stay in preparing for her new situation, and in spending a day occasionally with the good divine, and Mrs. Mildmay,

who shewed her a letter from her brother Captain Mildmay, wherein his "*Pussy*, his *Ugly Face*, and *Little Rosebud*," was not forgotten. She likewise went to see old Ann, who brought her to the young woman, who now had the infant at the breast, which seemed to thrive accordingly. She told her to be in readiness in a few days, and if she wanted any little trifle to settle what she might owe, she should have it. Margaret, the soldier's wife, thanked her young mistress, and said, "a couple of pounds would be enough, and as for being ready she might depend upon *her* at an hour's notice; for we *soldiers*, Madam, you must know, must hold ourselves in readiness to march at beat of the general, at any time, in the middle of the night for that *matter*, so it is all one to me, Mistress, at what hour you start. I have travelled many a wearisome mile after my good man, as I says, as he never cared to leave his *baggage* behind him, as he calls me, by way of a joke; and I would have followed him to the wars abroad this last time; but he was obligated to leave me behind, when I was breeding of my last, and, poor thing! I has been in sad taking since it

died ; so as I have lost my *own* dear bairn, I be proud as how I has got *yourn* to nurse, Miss."

" Mine !" cried Mary in astonishment, " who could tell you such a falsehood ? "

" Nobody for sartin, mistress," replied the young nurse ; " only as you seem so fond on't, I judged it might be some friend's or cousin's, for no mother can more belove it ; and 'tis a nice baby, that's the truth. I is sure I meant no offence, only as you called it your little one, out of kindness belike ; I thought —."

" My good woman," returned Mary gravely, " I have hired you to *nurse* that baby, and not to think of affairs that don't concern you. For the sake of that infant's mother, I will fulfil *my* duty ; do *yours* ; and that is all that is required of you."

Mary as she returned with Ann, observed, that the nurse she had provided, seemed rather too *loquacious* for her ; and wished Ann could provide another.

" That will be, my dear Miss, mortally impossible in the time. I searched far and near, before I got *her* ; she is a nice, tidy body, but as you say, rather chatty, but

no harm ; for I have heard soldiers' wives romance, and talk more of their exploits in one hour than their husbands have gone through in a year ; but I shall give her a caution, depend on't, and if she won't be said, I'll send her packing about her business, I will by my truly ; no ! no ! no gossipers for me."

The old woman next day gave the nurse the necessary caution, and she promised implicit compliance.

As Mary had now a little family, her luggage was enlarged, and her friends advised her to hire a roomy post-chaise, which would convey them and their trunks conveniently, without being subjected to the impositions of stage coach-men, and payment of luggage. " Besides, you may all three travel at your leisure," said Mr. Percy, " without being incommoded, and you will find yourself a considerable saver in the end."

At seven o'clock on the appointed morning, the post-chaise was at Mrs. Forester's, and Mary, old Ann, the nurse, and child were seated ; when on parting with her friend, that good lady only obliquely hinted, as she



had now got a family *before* her time, if she found it troublesome, old Ann could return with the charge. Mary smiled and bowed; and the post-chaise drove off.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

As Mary was not hurried for time, and the greater part of the journey lay through cross country roads, she found this mode of conveyance much more agreeable; as she travelled at her ease, and ran besides no risk of disappointment in shifting from one stage-coach to another; with the chance of three places not being vacant, which would cause considerable expence and delay. The long journey of one hundred and sixty miles, in cold weather, was much more comfortable in a snug warm post-chaise, than to be crowded among a set of strangers, with a young infant under her care.

Margaret, the soldier's wife, had often passed these roads before, in her different marches and counter-marches with the regiment; she knew almost every inn they passed. "Ay, Mistress," cried she; "there we were quartered on such a day, and a very good house it is, a very civil landlord and a soldier's friend." As they proceeded, "*ah!* I

is glad we does not stop there ; there isn't a bed for a Christian to lay his bones on ; and a surly hog the master of it is ; he looks on a soldier as dirt, tho'f it is we who keeps a warm house over his head ; howsomdever he paid for his brutish niggardly conduct : for our lads in the morning cut away, and pocketed the best part of a large ham, that was hanging up with others in the kitchen ; and the best of the joke was, the fellor never missed it, till too late, when he might go whoop for it ; noa, they get's nothing but a loss, if they misbehave themselves to troops on the march."

" I think," replied Mary, " it is the interest of all inn-keepers, to be civil to travellers on the road ; a poor soldier's ready penny for what he calls, is as good as an officer's shilling, who calls about with authority, and frequently gives more trouble than his custom is worth."

" That's a sure thing, Mistress," returned the nurse : " it is the pence that makes the shillings, and not the shillings the pence, as I says. I never knowed a landlord that disregarded a two-penny customer, that ever his shilling or half-crown friends could make up the loss. I remembers Tom Tomkins

at the sign of the Punch-bowl on the York-road ; he was a great man for making of grogs ; he'd run to sarve a gentleman who called only for a sixpenny glass, aye, ready to break his neck ; and a poor dry and weary labourer might *call* and *call* till he was hoarse, for a mug of *ale*, before Muster Tom forsooth would send his pot-boy to draw him one. And now what's the upshot ? he is broke horse and foot, and he is a helper to an ostler at a great inn, I hears."

Mary smiled at the loquacity of this woman at first, but soon grew weary ; while it operated on the old nurse, at once, as a powerful soporific ; and it was impossible to say which was loudest, the *young* one's *tongue*, or the *old* one's *nose*.

On the whole, this was not an unpleasant journey. Mary slept three nights on the road ; at every place she stopped, she ordered a double-bedded room, and set off very early each morning ; and, on the fourth day at three o'clock in the afternoon arrived safely at her destination.

Mary was heartily glad her journey was at an end. The motion of the carriage lulled old Ann into a state of oblivion most of the way, and she might be truly called

“ *a sleeping partner,*” while the young nurse’s volubility was frequently checked by her mistress’s gravity and silence, who was tired with the repetition of trite anecdotes of landlords and soldiers, their different billets and quarters, of Serjeant *this*, and Corporal *that’s* wife, and other such commonplace matter.

The next morning after breakfast, Mary sent to apprise Mr. Day, one of the proprietors, of her safe arrival. That gentleman lost no time in waiting on her. He was a fashionable comely man of a fair and ruddy complexion, apparently not fifty ; but in reality considerably older. Yet from his dress and manner, it was evident, he wished to be thought in the very prime of life ; for vanity will follow some men to the grave.

After the usual salutations and enquiries about her journey, Mr. Day raised his eye-glass, and took an accurate survey of our Heroine from head to foot. Had she been a novice, or had this minute examination of her person, proceeded from fashionable impertinence, it might have considerably discomposed her ; but, rightly judging, it origi-

nated merely in the way of *business*, she let it pass.

After a pause, the proprietor stroked his chin, and began, "You are not, Miss Irwin, quite so tall or so full a figure, as I was led to suppose. I was given to understand, you were of a very commanding height, and more matured in years than you appear to be."

"I hope, Sir," Mary modestly replied, "that the little merit I may be allowed to possess, will not be estimated by *weight, height, or age.*"

"Certainly not," returned Mr. Day, raising his glass again, and observing her colouring, "certainly not. I did not mean to insinuate any thing of the sort. Your complexion, I perceive, is *naturally* vivid; but that is of no material consequence. The *countenance*, the *features*, the *expression*, and above all, the *eye*, are the principal considerations. I have the happiness to inform you, all these meet my approbation; your *profile* is excellent, and the *full contour* admirable: and the intelligence that beams from those *lucid orbs*, the windows of the soul, perfectly correspondent to the *tout en*

*semble*; pray, Miss Irwin, oblige me, and walk a turn or two."

Mary rose, and with a smile thought within herself, "Am I a *horse*; that all my points are to be thus examined?"

"I am perfectly satisfied," said the proprietor, with an affable and condescending nod. "Your figure is just what I wish it; of a height fully efficient for tragedy and genteel comedy; and for *years*," added he with a smile, "the fault, if any, will decrease daily."

"*Youth*, Sir, I believe," said Mary, "as the more *tractable* period of life, has seldom been a ground for objection. *You*, Sir, I imagine, never found it so in your *early* days."

"*Madam!*" returned the proprietor visibly touched, "a *few* years back I was sanguine, as *youth* generally is; it is apt to be headstrong and *self-opiniated*: and that is a *strong fault*, as it precludes conviction of its error. I have no hopes from a young person, whose vanity leads him to *slight* the suggestions which practice and experience might condescend to impart."

"Most truly and judiciously observed, Sir," replied Mary, perceiving the pro-

prietor's consequence rising: "such vanity is contemptible, and scarcely pardonable; yet, Sir, years have frequently rendered the possessor less amenable to improvement, or more confirmed in *self-opinion*,"

"All, my dear Madam," said Mr. Day, "arising from a defective education originally, from the vanity I have before mentioned, and from the school they came from. Our theatre, Miss Irwin, is not a school to teach *beginners*; we have no time, nor patience for such an unthankful and unprofitable task. Our audience expect that we offer to their refined judgment, none but those of acknowledged talent *elsewhere*: as *such*, Miss Irwin, I have engaged *you*, from the powerful recommendation you have been honoured with; but there is yet much to be got over: *new faces*, however fascinating and agreeable *novelty* may be, will not atone for want of ability. The frequenters of *our* theatres, are perhaps the most particular, I do not hesitate to pronounce, in the kingdom; so much so, that it is not many years since they would admit *none* but *London* performers to tread their boards, and those of the first class and celebrity. We have at length, by perseverance, con-



vinced them, that merit may be *provincial*; but then, though they are pleased with our endeavours to procure performers worthy of their notice, it is *their fiat* alone that stamps their fame. *Yes, our theatres*, and this town in particular, has produced a gentleman, now in the very first rank of *metropolitan* fame, notwithstanding the long established reputation and intrinsic merit of his veteran opponent: it was *here*, his abilities were discovered, and cherished accordingly. Descended from highly respectable connexions, endowed with genius improved by a superior education, he came into public notice at once, the scholar and the gentleman: his private character even excels his public estimation; in every relative duty, as a husband, father, and son, his conduct *has* been, and is still exemplary; few *equal*, none can *surpass* him in those essential and imperishable qualities. Yet this man of merit had difficulties to encounter on the onset, which practice, observation, and experience alone could overcome."

"I see, Sir, the arduous task I have undertaken," answered Mary with a sigh; "that practice, attentive observation, and

consequently *years*, are necessary to rise to eminence."

" Pardon me, Miss Irwin," interrupted the proprietor, " not *years*, considered as *length of time*, but the *application and use* made of that time, is meant, be it *short* or *long*. *Months* are of more advantage to some, than *years* to others. We have recent instances of some very *young* performers having arrived suddenly to the summit of the profession, I will not say of *excellence*, that would be too much; for there is still ample room for improvement. But chance, opportunity, a lucky vacancy, and other combined circumstances, have pushed them into notice. Talent they certainly possess, to enable them to stand their ground; but I find, young as they appear, they have most of them been reared on the stage, and consequently may be styled, "*youthful veterans*;" and they have thereby acquired a *confidence*, or more correctly speaking, that necessary and indispensable *self-possession*, which practice and observation can alone bestow. This the public are not aware of, and applaud them as phænomena! *Practice and observation*, Miss Irwin, are

the supporters, which decorate *our* heraldry, and uphold the coronet of fame fixed on the brow of *theatric*, emulative *genius*."

"*Confidence*, I know, is indispensable, Sir," said Mary.

"*Yes*," returned Mr. Day; "but by *that confidence*, I do not mean *assurance*. I consider it merely, as the quality of *self-possession*, in contradistinction to *timidity*, or *bashfulness*; which time and practice wears away. Taken in the other sense, I myself have witnessed many *confident* young men wholly unimproveable, though endowed with abilities far above mediocrity: this kind of confidence may properly be called vanity, not to say presumption, and springs from a false estimate of their own powers, which renders them deaf to friendly admonition. Of such I have no hopes."

"That sort of confidence which you have just described, Sir," replied our Heroine, "may well be termed presumption: and I should despise myself, if I thought a particle of it inherent in my nature. Believe me, Mr. Day, I shall ever hold myself most gratefully obliged to that friend who will condescend to point out my defects, aid me in a just conception of my author,

and instruct me in the indispensable *minutiae* of the business, so necessary for stage effect : conscious of my inexperience, I shall ever bow to the opinion of my superiors in knowledge."

" I think it my duty, Madam, to impart every possible information in my power to the ladies and gentlemen of my theatre, not only for their own individual advantage, but for the general effect ; and I will pronounce I have never met with a young lady so thoroughly sensible of the requisites necessary to constitute an actress, nor one whose personal and mental endowments afford so fair a prospect of attaining excellence. I do not flatter, I am above it ; women of sense are not to be deceived."

" Oh Sir, !" thought Mary, " this is, to be sure, no *flattery*, if I were weak enough to swallow it ;" therefore bowed in silence to the compliment.

" Your education has been liberal, Miss Irwin, no doubt ?"

" For a *female*, Sir, no expence was spared ; but with what success, I have not the vanity to say."

" French, and Italian, I presume ?"

" I have conversed for some hours with

some eminent Parisians, Sir ; and I know Italian so far, as to comprehend every musical technical term."

" Hem ! 'tis well," said the proprietor, stroking his chin, " a proficient in music then ? and from the tone of your voice, no inconsiderable vocal performer, I think ?"

" By no means sufficient, Sir, to warrant a public display of such talents."

" That is not required, Miss Irwin ; but they are accomplishments necessary to complete the woman of fashion. Are you fond of waltzing ?"

" By no means, Sir : however fashionable it has become, it is the no less indelicate, in my poor judgment."

" Umph !" cried Mr. Day ; " but you'll allow it gives an ease, an indescribable *naïveté*, and graceful freedom to the figure, which sets off the person, and shews it in the most alluring form."

" I cannot deny, that it shews the figure, but in my humble idea, in a *disgusting*, not *alluring* form."

" Umph ! you surely are not an advocate for the stiff formality of the old school, Miss Irwin ?"

" I am no advocate for *extremes*, Sir ; but

though the stiff formality of the one might bend to mix more ease with it, yet the close contact and open display of person should be corrected and restrained in the other."

"I comprehend you perfectly; but fashion, my dear Madam, is a despotic goddess; and will be universally worshipped."

Mr. Day now rose to take his leave. "I have procured you very convenient apartments, Miss Irwin, which, I doubt not, will meet your approbation, as your residence will not be far from the theatre. You can remove immediately, which I would by all means recommend you to do; here is the card of direction; she is a widow, an elderly lady of strict habits, and not accustomed in general to let lodgings, but has accommodated you from my recommendation. To-morrow I shall again have the honour of paying you my *devoirs*." So saying, with a polite bow, Mr. Day wished her a good morning.

"This visit has in some degree," thought Mary, "let me into the character of this gentleman; a man of judgment and accurate discernment, I have no doubt, and well he knows it, for he expects, I see, an implicit deference to his opinion: so far from reject-

ing, I think every performer ought to be *thankful* for those hints which experience may dictate, when not delivered in an arbitrary tone ; but there is no judging from a first interview. There is another partner, I find, who may have different propensities, and an acting Manager besides. Circumspection is necessary to please them all ; I will strive to accommodate myself to their tempers, and I think, if they are not very contradictory, I may chance to gain their favour, at least I will endeavour so to do, and that is as much as I can at present promise.

Mary now rung for old Ann. “ Take this card, Ann, and get one of the porters of this inn to go with you, and show where the person lives, to whom this is the address. Mr. Day has procured me lodgings at her house ; look to the apartments, and see whether they will suit ; if so, let them be got ready immediately : an inn is a very expensive, and improper place for us to remain in.”

The old woman got a porter to conduct her to the house ; it was a neat private one, in a small retired street, at a convenient and short distance from the theatre royal. Mrs.

Willoughby, the widow who kept it, lived upon her small income, and had one only grand-daughter who resided with her, and kept her house in order, acting in every respect as a confidential friend and servant.

When Ann knocked at the door the girl opened it, and ushered her into the parlour, where sat the widow with a large Bible before her : having delivered the card, and finding the lodgings were kept, she requested to look at the apartments. “ My young mistress has left all these things to me ; knowing I have lived long enough in the world, to know what’s wanting on these occasions.”

Mrs. Willoughby accordingly conducted the old woman up stairs to the first floor ; a handsome drawing-room and bed-chamber ; small, but very neatly furnished.

“ Well,” cried Ann, I purtest and vow, these will do to be sure ; but they are very small.”

“ Large enough, I imagine, for a single young lady,” said the widow, “ who does not see much company.”

“ Company,” cried Ann, “ no, no, it would never suit us. She is no *gallavanter* ; I assure you ; she will have plenty of her



own business to mind. And what, saving your presence, Madam, do you ax for these rooms ?”

“ Sixteen shillings a week,” replied Mrs. Willoughby, “ and very cheap they are, when you consider house-rent and taxes, and that the young lady is to be found in every necessary, and the use of a kitchen and servant to cook and wait upon her.”

“ Marcy upon us,” exclaimed Ann, “ what an unconscionable price ! But as for attendance, we shan’t want it, for I shall market, go of errands, and cook, and do all her little odd jobs myself ; I wouldn’t trust no sarvant, not I.”

“ Well, as you please for that,” said the widow ; “ but that is the price ; no less, and it is a great favour that I let them at all ; but my late husband used to paint the theatre, and so I would fain oblige Mr. Day, who is, though a master player, notwithstanding a very worthy gentleman.”

“ But,” said Ann, “ we want another room with a bed in’t ; for the *nurse* and *child* and me to sleep in.”

“ Nurse and child !” exclaimed the astonished widow : “ *nurse* and *child* ! pray, good woman, did I hear you right ? I thought

your lady was single. I did not understand she was a *married* woman?"

"Why, no more she is not," said Ann; "but for the matter of that, it is a *secret*, and I'll tell you one of these days, as you seems to be a discreet body like myself, and not given to blab."

"I don't want to know any of your mistress's *secrets*, woman," said Mrs. Willoughby; "but I have no other bed to spare; there are lodgings in plenty to take such people in. *Who* or *what* you are, it matters not to *some*; but, old as I am, I have a *character* to preserve. No, no, my apartments won't suit you, I find. I wonder how Mr. Day could think of making my house a receptacle for his young ladies, with their nursed children: he ought to have known me better."

"I does not know what you are driving at," returned old Ann in a huff. "Marry come up, indeed; my young mistress is a born gentlewoman, and come of vartrous parentage, and will pay her way like a princess. Tho'f she does go on the stage, she is no less lionest for that."

"Oh! no, sure. I know what the player women are before this day," cried the widow;

“but I am a serious woman, and can’t keep my doors open till twelve o’clock at night ; so, it won’t suit, and you must go elsewhere.”

“We are strangers,” said Ann, “and nobody knows us here. Can you recommend us to a lodgment, where we can have two bed rooms, and a nice sitting room, like yours, with the use of a kitchen.”

“I recommend you, woman,” cried Mrs. Willoughby aloud ; “what do you take me for ? the like of *you* ? Not I indeed, I am no such a person. I would have you know I know what *propriety* is, and can’t uphold such persons ; but really I am ashamed of an old woman of your years, to countenance such doings, and gad about with players, when you ought to be settled, and thinking of your latter end. Go, go, and repent ; you are a bad old woman, I fear ; and more is the pity ; but it is never too late to mend.”

“Pize upon you,” cried old Ann in a passion, “who is it you come for to rate in this manner ? What do you know of me or my young mistress, if you come to that ? and who are *you* belike ? you are a bit of a *methody* mayhap ; you are never no better

for that, let me tell you. Marry come up indeed, with your preachment to me? *You* talk against players, yet your good man, rest him! could work for the play-house, and you take player's money; I warrant, I hate such hypocrites, alack and a-well-a-day! I have seen too much on them. We would not live in your house, if you gave it *free gratis* for nothing." And away old Ann trotted quite in a fluster. It was full two hours before she came back to the inn, for she had missed her way, and she never thought of bidding the porter stop to conduct her back.

Mary was much alarmed at her stay. When the old woman entered she threw herself into a chair, and quite out of breath! "Marcy upon us," cried she, "this is a sad large and wicked place I believe. I wish we were fairly out on't. We are as far to seek, mistress, as ever!" She then related, as well as she could recollect, what passed between her and the widow; saying, "she was a stiff methody sort of a body, and could not spare two beds; and began a preachment about players, and nursed children, and would have no such folks, not she. Nay, Madam, and behold you, she called

me a wicked old woman for following you about so, when I am sure it is the delight of my old heart to attend you ; but I did not let it go with her, not I ; I gave her her own, to come for to dare to talk of my young mistress and your consarns, who is *she*, I trow ?”

“ What could the woman say of me ?” said Mary.

“ She said she did not understand young ladies having a nurse and a child, and could not be troubled with such : in short, she spoke very *queerish*, I thought, and looked black ; and said, she could not make room ; and at last told me plainly to seek elsewhere ; so I came away, but not before I told her a bit of my mind : Aye, aye, by my truly, she got the wrong sow by the ear, when she came for to talk to me.”

“ Well, Ann,” said Mary, “ we must put up with this disappointment. I hope we may meet no greater. In so large a town as this, there must be a number of respectable lodgings, and we shall not be long at a loss.” She then rang the bell : the waiter appeared. “ Tell your mistress I should be glad to speak with her.”

The mistress accordingly came to her.

“ I am sorry to be so troublesome, Madam” said Mary ; “ but as I am a perfect stranger here, I should be happy if you could inform me where I am likely to meet with suitable apartments. I require a sitting-room and bed-chamber for myself, a sleeping-room for this old woman and a nurse, with the use of a kitchen. The lodgings Mr. Day was so good as to provide for me, will not suit, for there is but one bed, and I require two.”

“ I understand you, Madam ; you wish for another room for the nurse and your little one,” replied the mistress.

Mary smiled. “ The infant is my little *nephew*, not *my* child ; my poor sister, who died in consequence of its birth, solemnly bequeathed him to my care. His father is abroad, and circumstances have so occurred, that I have taken him under my own eye, till his father returns from America. I think this explanation necessary, as it must otherwise seem odd for a *single* person, like *me*, to be incumbered with such a charge.”

“ True, Miss,” replied the innkeeper’s wife ; “ people in this town are very apt to be impertinently inquisitive, particularly about strangers, and of your profession espe-

cially. I will send immediately, and get one as near the theatre as possible, and *reasonable*, I hope; though house rent and taxes are exorbitantly high. Now I think on't, a friend of mine, last night only, mentioned to me her first floor was untenanted; it is but a little way from the Theatre Royal, and I know will suit you completely. She is moreover a very friendly woman, and by no means curious or particular. I will step to her myself." These tidings were very agreeable, and Mary most sincerely thanked her for her obliging conduct.

The nurse now came in with the infant. "She hoped her mistress would soon get settled in a lodging; for it was quite cumbersome to be lollopping about, among a set of maids and waiters and drivers, with a child in her arms, and no place to one's-self to mind it properly."

Mary briefly replied, "An inn was more disagreeable to her, who was never used to such, than it could possibly be to a *soldier's wife*, accustomed, on their travel, to such places. That they would soon be settled."

The nurse retired; but seemingly not well pleased with the reserve and distance her young mistress evinced, which was necessary

to check a familiarity that she plainly perceived the woman was inclined to assume.

The cloth was now laying for her dinner, and Mary being lonesome, would have detained old Ann ; but, “ No, my dear young lady,” said the old woman, “ I knows my place better. The nurse and I will have a snack and our teas *below* ; and it don’t look pretty to leave her among strange folks. There is a little back room, where we can sit, snug and private to ourselves, and you can ring, if you want either of us.” Saying this, Ann left her mistress.

Mary, as she stood at the window, viewed the busy faces passing, but perceiving two officers lounging along arm and arm, at a little distance on the opposite side of the street, she instinctively drew back. Their faces she was positive she had seen elsewhere ; as they approached, she immediately recognized them to be Captain Hawkins, and Lord Henry Augustus Whitaker of the Hussars. They sauntered onward laughing, and staring rudely at every decent young female they met ; but never cast their eyes towards the windows of the inn. “ ’Pshaw !” thought Mary, “ why should I be alarmed or surprised ? They are obliged to change *their*



quarters, as often as performers, and I have nothing to apprehend from their presence ; so I'll think no more of them ;" and she sat down to her dinner.

As soon as the waiter had removed the cloth, he informed Mary, that his mistress had succeeded and engaged apartments for her and her attendants.

Presently the mistress herself came. Mary apologized for the trouble she had given her, which the friendly hostess begged her not to mention. " You will find them, Miss Irwin," added she, " perfectly convenient. Apprised as I was of your first disappointment, I was resolved you should not meet with a second. I was asked twenty-five shillings per week, and at last with difficulty obtained them for a guinea. You will be found every necessary article, and coals, for that sum ; and when you see your lodgings, you will not count them dear at that price ; but they cannot be got ready for you till to-morrow evening. In the mean time, you may be as private as possible here, none shall incommode you ; and I shall take it as a favour, if you take a cup of tea with me and my daughters, and pass the evening with

us. You must find it lonesome, a stranger, by yourself."

Mary politely thanked her, but was sorry to decline the invitation, having some letters to dispatch by the night's post. She wrote accordingly to Mrs. Forester, apprising her of her safe arrival. The remainder of the evening she passed in reading the paper, and a review that lay in the window, and having taken a slight repast, she retired early to rest.

The next day, she was waited upon by Mr. Day, who seemed to carry something of import in his countenance. After the usual compliments, and stroking his chin for some time, he began. "I was in the hope of finding you settled at Mrs. Willoughby's. I was at the pains of procuring a residence at the most respectable widow's; whose scrupulous attention to decorum, would of itself be a tacit sanction to a young lady. Understanding from the Viscountess you were *single*, I provided lodgings for you as such; judge then my surprise and astonishment, when on enquiry, I found her apartments insufficient for a lady with a family. You should have acquainted me, that you were married, Madam."

“ I am not married, Sir, I assure you. I am single,” said Mary.

“ Not *married* ! *single* you say ? Not *married* ! ” repeated the Proprietor, “ really, it is a *pity* ! I am *sorry*, *very sorry* for it ; for I am informed, pardon me, Madam, that, you have brought with you, an infant with its nurse and another attendant ? ”

“ I have, Sir,” said Mary, bowing.

“ Really, Madam, you must pardon me ; but you have taken a very imprudent step, particularly for one of our profession ; a most *unprecedented* appearance it most certainly will have, and what, I must be free and candid to observe, we can by no means countenance.”

“ Your pardon for a moment, Sir, and I will endeavour to explain.”

“ Pray do, Madam, for at present, I am quite confounded at this seeming mystery.”

“ Did I wish to conceal it, I should not thus travel with it openly.” Mary then informed him it was her only sister’s child, who died as she gave it birth, bequeathing it to her care : that the desertion of its unnatural father had caused the mother’s death. The little orphan thus cruelly abandoned, doubly claimed her attention, and she hoped her cha-

racter would not suffer for an act, she held it a *religious* duty to fulfil.

“ I sincerely applaud the piety of your motives, Miss Irwin, and I am myself perfectly convinced of the purity of your conduct ; but you are *young*, and the world prone to *censure*. I need not mention, that ladies in our profession are the constant theme for animadversion : as being *public* characters, *prudence* and circumspection are indispensable on their part, if they wish to preserve their reputation. And I must observe, appearances must be preserved : if you value, as I think you do, your fair and spotless name, this child must be speedily removed to a distance. It is every way improper it should be *near* you. In the mean time, should the subject unfortunately get wind, I am happy to have it in my power to explain the truth, and advocate your truly *unparalleled* affection, which risks your own reputation for an exemplary and too scrupulous *vow*, I must say, *incautiously* made.”

“ A vow, Sir, I must preserve, as given to a dying sister. Oh, Sir ! had you seen her !”

“ Enough, Miss Irwin, I applaud, I admire, sincerely do I admire your conduct ;

but give me leave, at a future opportunity, to reason with you on the subject, when you are more settled, and we have leisure to reflect and deliberate. You are provided with lodgings."

"I am, Sir."

"I am glad you are accommodated; but, indeed, you will find it necessary to send this child away."

"We will talk further on the subject, Sir," said Mary.

"The *sooner* the *better*, Miss Irwin." Saying this, with a polite bow and pressure of her hand, the Proprietor wished her a good morning.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

ON the evening of the next day, word having been sent that her apartments were ready, Mary left the inn, followed by Ann the nurse and child, and was conducted by the maid servant, who waited to escort them. Her luggage, which was heavy, consisting of two large trunks, and a small one, with band-boxes, &c. and the boxes of her attendants, was conveyed to her lodgings on a truck. Mrs. Larkins, the owner of the house, was at the door, ready to receive her new lodger; but just as she came in the sight of the house, she perceived two gentlemen by the light of the lamps, who seemed to follow, and to watch where she would stop. She was muffled up, it being a frosty evening, and though they had round hats and great coats, by their deportment they appeared military men. She heard them whisper the porter who drew the truck.

“There, I said so, did not I?” cried one; “and I can almost swear to the figure.”

“Nonsense,” replied the other; “but to convince you ——” and he immediately accosted the nurse who was carrying the infant. “Where are you going with that little one, this cold evening, my dear?”

“Home, Sir, an’t please you,” said Margaret, “with my mistress.”

“Is that lady your mistress?”

“Yes, Sir, to be sure: we be just come off a long journey.”

“Take care of the infant; that’s right: you’re a careful mother I see,” said the gentleman.

“It is not *mine*, I only nurses it.”

“No! whose is it then?”

“It belongs to my mistress, Sir.”

“And what does it consarn *you*, whose child it be?” cried Ann, whether it is *her’s* or *mine*.”

“*Yours*, you old harridan! ha! ha!” said the first gentleman; “you must be ground forty years younger first.”

“*Harridan!*” echoed the old woman, “go to Old Harry yourself. Come along, Madge, and don’t answer such impertinent fellows.”

“Aye, aye,” cried the other gentleman, “mind what old granny says. Good bye, old

one. 'There, I hope, you are convinced, you've lost your half a dozen of wine. She is a *married* woman, and was here when we were quartered in this town about three years ago. She plays the *Chamber-Maids*. Her name is, is, Mrs.—Mrs.—' Here their voices died away, as they proceeded.

Mary was by no means pleased at this interruption, which was just over by the time she reached the house. Mrs. Larkins welcomed her, and immediately conducted her up stairs, where there was a blazing fire, and the tea-equipage laid for her reception.

Mrs. Larkins was a very respectable, good looking woman, between thirty and forty; her husband was principal clerk and overseer of a large manufactory, and was seldom at home but at meal-times. They had two children, a girl about fourteen, and a son turned of ten, but were both put out to school, and only came home during the holidays.

Our Heroine found her apartments particularly convenient; there were three rooms and a large closet on a floor, so that everything she wanted was near at hand. The



child would be constantly under her own eye, and she was resolved not to be persuaded to part with it, unless almost compelled thereto.

As Mr. Day was informed by the mistress of the inn where Mary was to reside, he sent a note to her next morning by the call-boy, with his compliments, requesting her attendance at the green-room at twelve, as the whole company were to meet previous to the season's commencing, to arrange the business, and settle the opening parts for some fresh performers, who had been recently engaged. Mary sent word she would attend.

Mary attired herself in an elegant mourning dress, and set forward to the theatre, which was not above five minutes walk from the residence. On entering the green-room, the whole *corps dramatique* was assembled. Mary bowed on entrance, which was returned profoundly by the gentlemen, and distantly and stiffly by the ladies, except one, a large, fat, elderly woman, who called out, "Welcome, Miss: I don't know your name, but time enough for that, we shall all be acquainted by and by. Come, my dear, sit down by an old woman; old enough, I

believe, to be grandmother to most of you. Mr. Plant, I know will make room for you."

"Oh, certainly, by all means," cried Plant, with a grin. "I am ever happy in an opportunity to oblige the ladies." And he immediately started from his seat to accommodate our Heroine.

"I have not found you so very *obliging*," said Mrs. Blinkworth, a thin lady, about forty. "I asked you to study a part for my last benefit, and what was your reply? I have not forgot it."

"If you have so retentive a faculty for *imaginary* injuries, Madam," replied Plant, "you need no remembrancer, nor do I, of what I have actually forgot."

"Have you?" returned the lady; "then it is necessary to remind you: you refused to study *Dangle*, in *The Critic*, for me."

"How could I have obliged you, and not have offended the Manager? I was cast *Lord Burleigh*, and you know how *arduous* the undertaking, to be *perfect*."

"This I know," answered Mrs. Blinkworth, "that *Dangle* would have suited you to a hair; for you are always dancing attendance on the proprietors."

“Yes,” cried Mr. Bland, “Plant is a very good-natured fellow ; I will say that for him, he does what nobody else would do. But he picks his steps, and can bend, and turn, and wind ; for he knows, Managers’ favour is very slippery ground.”

“So it seems,” said Plant, “if I may judge by *you*, for you feel *sore* yet, from the fall from their favour.”

“I spoke my mind too freely,” returned Bland ; “that’s what nobody can accuse *you* of.”

“True,” answered Plant, “I profit from your tumble ; I never set my opinion against those who are determined to have their own way in every thing ; and you must allow, Mr. Bland, all Managers are of that description.”

“That makes you play *Canton* so naturally,” said Mr. Atall : “you have the most obsequious, *companionable* laugh.”

“I can always *laugh* in my sleeve at *envy*,” replied Plant, and “smile with contempt too, at the wit which recoils on itself.”

“What do you mean, Sir ?” asked Mr. Atall.

“*Nothing*, gentle Sir, when I talk *to* or

*of* you. Does the *fool's cap* fit you? I thought Mr. Whimpey generally wore it."

Mr. Whimpey, the clown and low comedian, now started up, and advancing ludicrously, cried to Mr. Atall, "Pray, gentle Signor, don't deprive a poor clown, a *low* comedian, of his bread; it is beneath your *high* notice. You are an *aspiring* hero, but you have no mercy; you fain would be *at all* in the ring."

At this, the green-room rung with applause, for the grimace of Whimpey was irresistible; which was not a little increased, when the fat old lady, taking a pinch of snuff, placed her arms a-kimbow, and exclaimed, "Hey-day! gemmen! don't turn our green-house to a fish-stall; if so, pray, how do you sell your *dabbs*?"

Another loud laugh, which was suddenly stopped by the creaking of Mr. Day's boots, a sufficient caution for the resumption of gravity and etiquette.

Mr. Day, with a polite and ceremonious *circular* bow to the company assembled, on perceiving, with the aid of his glass, Mr. and Mrs. Newcome, Mr. Strange, and our Heroine, went up respectfully to each, took their hands, and introduced them to the other

performers, as fresh accessions to the theatre. This was a necessary step ; for though the old fixtures knew pretty well what they were, they waited for this formal announcement of their claims to notice, as members of the same community, from the oral authority of the ostensible proprietor.

Mary now could not help smiling within herself, at observing the profound deference and respect that was paid to every word that came from this gentleman ; and that every performer present was, to the full, as *obsequious* as the accused Mr. Plant ; not excepting Mr. Bland himself, who boasted of his plain-dealing. She therefore began to think there was as much reliance to be placed on the former, as on any of his contemporaries. She could easily perceive he possessed as much wit, less self-sufficiency, and far more good-nature than the rest ; and this casual observation her subsequent experience justified.

Mr. Barlow, the acting Manager, now made his appearance, with a long list of plays and entertainments for the ensuing season, the parts of many of which wanted fresh filling up. This gentleman was a tall,

robust, portly figure, with a countenance round and jolly, which bespoke a fund of dry humour, of which he certainly possessed no inconsiderable share. He was the life and soul of every club he belonged to, particularly the *oyster-club* here, and at the other town ; and it is to *him*, the late French traveller in his tour through England, is indebted for his libel against this country, wherein he says, “ The English eat their *fish raw*, and drink their ale out of jack-boots.”

Mr. Barlow assured this French Solomon of the fact, offering to introduce him to their *oyster* club. This, Monsieur, with a stare and shrug, refused. The Manager then shewed him a leathern bottle, alias canteen, made, as he drily observed, out of a jack-boot, from which the expression of black cans, called *jacks*, took its rise. All which information Monsieur Piron greedily swallowed with his brandy, and many a hearty laugh the Manager has had at the Frenchman’s credulity.

Mr. Barlow now affixed the different lists in the usual place, and retired with the proprietor to consult upon private business.

All eyes were now fixed upon the lists. Mr. Atall, Mrs. Blinkworth, and Miss Dashwold advanced to reconnoitre.

“So,” cried Atall, “here is the Clandestine Marriage, and no Lord Ogleby, no Sir John Melville, nor Lovel, cast! How is this?”

“Ask the Manager,” said Plant; “you need neither be alarmed, nor grumble; for by your own report you have performed all three.”

“Not in this company, Sir. Lord Ogleby is my part *here*, I should suppose.”

“Suppose!” observed Plant; “the Manager thinks otherwise, and a fresh candidate should start.”

“Oh, for an *opening* part!” cried Atall; “all is fair.” And he looked at Mr. Newcome and Mr. Strainge; “but I am in *possession*.”

“Just as long as the Proprietors think proper,” said Mr. Bland.

“And so, Dashwold,” cried Mrs. Blinkworth, “*you* are in Miss Sterling. It is well they have left *me* out of the piece, I would do nothing else believe me.”

“No more you ought,” said the old lady; “for I will say you are at *home* in it.”

“ You are in, Madam,” said Miss Dashwold to Mrs. Newcome, “ for Fanny Sterling. Have you ever played it ?”

“ Lord ! what a question !” exclaimed Mrs. Downing ; “ do you think the Manager would put any fresh performers in for a part they never had studied.”

“ I am not such a *novice* as you may think, Madam,” said Mrs. Newcome, with an air.

“ Oh ! cry you mercy, Madam,” returned Miss Dashwold, with a low curtsy ; “ I did not mean to offend, but now I look, I perceive you are an old stager.”

“ Your pardon,” said Mr. Newcome, “ if you mean *me*, you are correct in your statement. I am nearly about your own standing ; twelve years have I trod the boards ; but Mrs. Newcome is not above three years on any stage ; yet she is allowed to be very *forward* for her time.”

“ O certainly,” replied Miss Dashwold ; “ there is no denying that ; and she will play Fanny Sterling quite in character. Ha ! ha ! ha !”

“ Ha ! ha !” echoed Mrs. Blinkworth ; “ but she may not be so fortunate in the *single young ladies* ; this is the *Clandestine Marriage*, you know.”



Now it was evident poor Mrs. Newcome was large in the family-way ; and what rendered it still more *à propos*, Mr. Newcome took her unknown from her parents, and privately married her, and they were not as yet reconciled. Mr. Newcome whispered his wife, and both were visibly agitated, which the two ladies as visibly enjoyed.

“ Heigho !” instinctively sighed Mary.

“ Aye, my dear,” whispered Mrs. Downing, the good-humoured fat old lady, “ you see what a precious set they are. Thank Heaven ! I have outlived all their jokes, and am the first to joke upon myself. Your turn will come next, depend on’t.”

“ I hope not, Madam,” said Mary, “ for I am not happy at reply.”

“ Then I must take your part,” said Mrs. Downing ; “ so don’t be disheartened. They are all in awe of me, even old Barlow himself. They call me the *Kate Clive* of the company.”

Mr. Day and Mr. Barlow now re-entered ; and Mr. Barlow going up to Mr. Strainge, asked him if he had ever played *Hamlet* ?

“ I have *attempted*, Sir,” said the young gentleman modestly.

“ I am glad to hear you say so, Sir,” replied the Manager ; “ therefore *you* shall play it.”

“ I have played the part, Sir,” said Atall.

“ *Never*, my good Sir,” returned the Manager. “ You have gone on for it, but how ?”

“ Ask the audience, Sir ; they saw me.”

“ No, Sir, they did *not*,” said Mr. Barlow ; “ for since you compel me to speak, they turned their backs on you. They heard enough, however, to warrant us to recast the part.”

Mr. Atall was silenced, when he saw himself put in for Sir John Melville ; he made no reply, but returned to his seat in *dudgeon*.

Mr. Day approached Mary, and politely said to her, “ I shall thank you, Miss Irwin, if you will have the goodness to get ready in *Belvidera*, or *Lady Teazle*, on Monday evening next, which you please.”

“ *As you like it*, Sir,” cried Mary.

“ *Rosalind* do you mean ?” asked the Proprietor.

“ No, Sir ; but which part you think proper, Sir.”

“ *Belvidera*, by all means,” returned Mr. Day, bowing.

“ By all my endeavours and means will I undertake it, Sir.”

“ And I have little doubt of the successful result ;” replied the Proprietor, with a profound bow.

This little conversation was not so private but the attentive ears of the females overheard every syllable ; many sly winks, and oblique looks were cast on poor Mary, and the words, “ conceited,”—“ vain,”—“ presuming,”—“ new brooms,”—and “ novice,” were interchanged by Mrs. Blinkworth and Miss Dashwold ; while Mrs. Newcome looked at our Heroine, as if she could eat her.

“ Poor woman !” whispered Mrs. Downing to Mary ; “ that new lady is in a longing condition ; she looks at you, as if she could devour *you*, or the part of *Belvidera*.”

“ The latter, I should think,” said Mary, with a smile.

“ I pass by your residence,” said Mrs.

Downing ; “ so we will walk together, if you please.”

“ You are very obliging, Madam,” returned Mary. And the company now adjourned to their respective homes.

As they passed along, “ I perceive,” said the old lady, “ you have not long been used to the stage ; you were not bred to it ?”

“ No, Madam,” replied our Heroine.

“ Poor thing !” sighed the old lady ; “ you have a great deal to encounter yet, let your merit be what it will ; you have more to fear from the profession itself, than perhaps from any other quarter. *Jealousy* and *envy* are the father and mother of *detraction*, and I beg you to be on your guard before Mrs. Blinkworth. She will seek your confidence by her apparent sincerity, only to *betray* you, child. Remember, I give you this hint ; so good morning.”

Mary, when they separated, firmly resolved to put no confidence in any of their professions, but apply herself closely to her business. She lamented the distance now between her and her young friend, Miss Thompson, on whom with safety she could place reliance. Old Ann undoubtedly had her

young mistress's interest at heart, and any trust might be reposed in her ; but, there was a wide difference between a trust-worthy servant, and a young confidential friend, who could participate each other's feelings, and consult upon professional subjects : this was a loss she now materially felt ; and which, from the complexion of the present company with whom she was to associate, was not likely to be soon supplied. Mary was naturally reserved and bashful ; she feared to intrude, and disliked intrusion herself ; but none more firm in her attachments when once formed. There was a something, a blunt open kind of sincerity about Mrs. Downing, that pleased her, but her manners were coarse and old-fashioned ; and she seemed to pride herself upon her singularities. " I will not," thought she, " reject her friendship, which may prove real, for the information of a woman of her experience doubtless must be valuable ; but an intimacy, neither the disparity of our years and dispositions would authorize."

When she got home, she sat down, and wrote to Miss Thompson, giving an account of her joining the present company, and requesting to know how she went on in Bath,

the news of the theatre, and what occurrences she had met since they parted. She informed her of the death of her sister ; but no more, on that delicate subject ; and concluded with requesting the fulfilment of a promise of correspondence passing between them, and to which she now had led the way.

The business of the theatre commenced with "*The Ulandestine Marriage*," and "*The Liar*." The part of Lord Ogleby, by Mr. Chronic, who was a joint proprietor of *this* concern, but of no other. This gentleman had been, and still was, when his health permitted him, a most excellent actor ; but he was now advanced in life, and a martyr to the gout, which usually confined him six months of the year ; his name was, however, an attraction sufficient to fill the house. His lady, was a very active woman for her age, and very excellent in heavy tragedy, as *Lady Macbeth*, *Queen Elizabeth*, *Countess of Narbonne*, and *Lady Randolph*. They are both, moreover, universally respected and esteemed for their strict probity, and other estimable, domestic virtues.

Mary promised herself a treat in witnessing this piece ; she accordingly seated herself in one of the upper boxes, where she already

found Mrs. Blinkworth and Mr. Strainge; they both politely made room for her. Mr. Chronic in the old *Lord* was admirable; and was allowed by those who had seen them both, to be nearly equal to the *original*, the great Mr. King. Mr. Barlow, in *Sterling*, was particularly happy, those parts being exactly in his line. Mr. Plant's *Canton* depicted the obsequious *Swiss* to the life, but Mrs. Downing's *Mrs. Heidelberg* was, beyond supposition, *great*. Mary thought Miss Dashwold very spirited in *Miss Sterling*; but she by no means met with Mrs. Blinkworth's commendation, for "*Pish!—Oh dear!*" escaped that lady every now and then. The gentle *Fanny* suffered much in Mrs. Newcome's hands, whose affectation spoiled the simplicity of the character. Mr. Atall was very lively and entertaining as *Young Wilding* in *The Liar*. On the whole, our Heroine was highly entertained, and she acknowledged the merits of the company, as far superior to what she had ever seen.

Mr. Day was seated in his private box, as was Mr. Lilac in the opposite, both particularly attentive to the performance. "So," thought Mary, "you are there, gentlemen? Performers may well mind their *P's* and their

Q's, while under the immediate eye of such scrutinizing inspectors. I trust, I shall profit by this ; for I see, the slightest error cannot escape their penetration."

Hamlet was given out for the next night, and Mr. Strainge announced for the part. At rehearsal, when the King first accosts him,

"How now, my *Cousin*, Hamlet, and my *Son* ;"

Mr. Strainge modestly observed to the performer, he would be much obliged to him, if he would alter *and* my Son to *kind*, and read the line thus :

"How now, my Cousin Hamlet—*kind* my Son."

The performer with a sneer replied, he could not think of altering the text for any whim of his ; and asked him, why he wished such a *new* reading ?

"Pardon me, Sir," returned Mr. Strainge, "it is not a *new* reading. I wish to restore the original and *old* reading, for my reply is upon the words *cousin* and *kind* :—

"A little more than *kin*, and less than *kind*."

Mr. Chronic, who was present, immediately said, Mr. Strainge was right, for the



old edition of Shakespeare, by Theobald, which, after all, was the most correct as to the text, had *kind* and not *and*. For "*kind my son*," meant no more than a transposition for "*my kind son*," as "*good my lord*," and "*good your grace*," only meant, "*my good lord*," and "*your good grace*." For the *uncle* was now more than a mere cousin or *kinsman*. Hamlet was his son by the marriage to his mother, and consequently that son, from such incestuous connexion, was "*less than kind to him*, and on that account, as he murdered his father, to ascend his throne and bed."

With this explanation, Mr. Day and Mr. Barlow agreed.

When the night came, the theatre was well filled, and the new performer acquitted himself to the general satisfaction, and was most favourably received throughout: it was evident, he was a man of strong sense, and polished manners, his person and voice good, his judgment correct, but was somewhat deficient in energy. This was the only thing that Mr. Day observed, the next morning at rehearsal.

"All you want, Mr. Strange, is *confi-*

dence ; you are too diffident of your own powers, which I am conscious you possess ; but *practice* will remove that defect. I am highly gratified with your performance, Sir, believe me, and so was the audience. You only want a *little* of what Atall could well spare, and both would be considerable gainers."

"Aye, Sir," said Mr. Barlow, "you have only to make a friend of Atall here, and *borrow* a little of his *brass*."

"I never *lend* any of my properties," cried Atall.

"No ? then I would advise you to give it away, and you will be no loser in the end," replied Mr. Barlow.

Mary was very well satisfied to rehearse *Belvidera* to Mr. Strainge's *Jaffier* : he possessed great sensibility and feeling ; and he grew more and more animated in the scenes with her, as they proceeded. And the proprietors, Messrs. Day and Chronic, and the acting Manager, by their smiles and looks, seemed perfectly pleased with this specimen, and appeared to augur most sanguine hopes from the display of talent which Mary evinced ; for she found it necessary to make

some impression even at rehearsal, on those judges, whose decision she feared more than the opinion of the audience.

The night came, and Mary entered the green-room, dressed for her part. She was magnificently attired, the brilliant display she exhibited was most tastefully arranged. The ladies gazed on her in silence, and Mrs. Blinkworth whispered Miss Dashwold, that the splendour was ill-timed and ill-judged, the ornaments too crowded, &c. all loud enough for our Heroine to overhear ; but she passed it over in silence, for she recollected the words of Priuli to Jaffier,—

“ Reduce the *glittering trappings* of thy wife,” &c.

She was, therefore, conscious she was dressed in appropriate costume: in this she was confirmed on Mr. Day’s approach, who, with his glass, surveyed her accurately, and condescended a nod and smile of approbation. But how was she flattered when the elegant and accomplished Mr. Lilac came up to her, with, “ Upon my honour, Miss Irwin, I have for some time been analysing your dress, Mem, and I will not hesitate to pronounce it, on the whole, the most tasteful

and superb display, and the most applicable, as to costume, I ever beheld. Your robe so truly *Venetian*, of the richest fabric, I perceive, and your drapery and ornaments so gracefully disposed ! I vow, I am particularly gratified with your minute attention in these articles, so very essential, but too often carelessly attended to. You form, Miss Irwin, an admirable picture !”

“ Not of *still* life, I hope, Sir,” said Mary, smiling.

“ Oh, no ! impossible !” cried Mr. Lilac ; “ but really I don’t see how you can get *warm* in your part this evening, it is so miserably *cold*. I declare my feet have been absolutely frozen to the carpet all the morning.”

“ I never feel *cold* in my *business*, Sir,” was all Mary’s reply.

The little, elegant proprietor now turned to Mr. Strainge, and complimented him politely on his performance of Hamlet, for which the new performer modestly returned his thanks, and assured him, his exertions should be doubled, to merit the approbation of his employers, whose good opinion was a sure criterion of the public estimation.

Mary was greeted on her entrance with an

universal hand of encouragement. She exerted herself so successfully, that three distinct peals concluded her dying scene. And when Mr. Atall stepped forward to announce a *Comedy* for the next representation, “no,” was the general cry; “*this tragedy* again.” Atall bowed, and then gave it out, on which the whole house rang with applause. It is but justice to say, Mr. Strainge met deserved plaudits; he evinced a perfect conception of the part, and even divided the applause with Mary, in the impassioned scenes.

Mr. Day took our Heroine’s hand, and congratulated her on the very great impression she had made. “He had not,” he said, “seen the two parts more justly pourtrayed for many years, and scarcely exceeded in town.” This was no small praise, especially from a judge so accurate and hard to be pleased.

Old Ann, who had seldom or never seen a play, was however determined to have a peep at her young mistress. She accordingly placed herself in one of the galleries. The lights, the music, and the crowd assembled, struck the poor old woman with astonishment; all appeared enchantment, particularly when the curtain drew up, when Mary made

her appearance, and was gratulated by the audience. "May I never squint," exclaimed Ann, "but that is a very proper lady; some grand princess or duchess, she is dizen'd out so! How rich these great folks be, to have such fine clothes! Ah! I hope you have a charitable heart, for there is a power of poor in this large town!" But when she heard Mary speak, the old woman could not contain herself, but cried out, "Why, I protest and vow, it is my own dear young mistress after all; the child that I have dandled in these arms for many a long day. Who would have thought it? Lord! be good unto me; how she takes on! I wonders what they have done to her, to make her so sad?" As the interest of the tragedy deepened, the poor old woman's eyes overflowed. "Ah!" cried she, "it is a terrible sad job indeed! you were very wrong to mix with that wicked set, they will certainly be the death of her." But when Mary died, old Ann started up, "Let me out, let me out! I'll go for a doctor directly; she is only in a swoondy-fit; she must be bled. Ah! why did I come up here, at the risk of my old neck, and not stay below to mind and nurse you? What a barbarous set!" And away she forced her pas-

sage, while the gallery was highly diverted, and made way for her.

The old nurse ran down stairs as fast as she could hobble, and actually brought a surgeon with her behind the scenes. The doctor hurried along with her, and when they came round, old Ann cried, "Where is my dear young lady? Here I have fetched the doctor; where is she?"

"How came this about! Is the lady still insensible?" asked the Doctor.

"*Sir!*" said the Prompter, "do you mean Miss Irwin?"

"Certainly; this old woman told me her mistress fainted suddenly away upon the stage," answered the Surgeon; "and I am come in consequence; perhaps from over exertion."

"Likely enough," returned the Prompter, "but her *dying* scene was admirable!"

"*Dying!* oh Lord! ha' marcy!" roared out Ann; "it can't be. Pray, good Doctor, do bleed her, and bring her to life."

"I now see how it is," said the Surgeon; "this stupid old fool roused me from a hot supper, and I have run through the cold to administer my assistance to the lady: this may be a *stage-trick*, and afford you a laugh

at my expence ; but I take it in a *serious* light : it is a very agreeable thing indeed to leave a nice hot supper, and run half a mile, shivering in the cold, and did not wait to put on my great coat. These jokes are unpardonable. If the lady was really *dying*, or violently *ill*, it would be some satisfaction. But I am not to be *trifled* with in this manner ; and *you*, you old stupid ass, to know no better.” And away this modern Galen strutted most consequentially.

When Ann saw her mistress descending from her dressing-room, and ready to return home, she flew into her arms, and exclaiming, “ Ah ! my dear Miss Mary ! I am glad you are come to life again ; you frightened me out of my wits ; but ’tis a very wicked thing to *make believe* so. Death is a very serious business, Lord presarve us ! and should not be *played* with ! ” Mary now hurried home with the old woman, for she saw the performers gathering round her nurse, with an intent to quiz her.

Mary very soon established her fame. Her genteel comedy was equally admired with her tragedy ; she was the subject of encomium in the papers, coffee-houses, and private parties ; and she divided the public opinion



with the politics of the day. Mr. Strainge's merits were publicly canvassed; and the card-tables gave Mary to him, as an eligible match. Old Ann constantly went with her mistress to the theatre, and would fidget about her, though her presence was quite unnecessary, unless to see her home. But the good old creature thought her attentions a part of her incumbent duty.

About a month after, when Mary was performing *Mrs. Beverley*, in the *Gamester*, and she exclaims, when a knocking at the door is heard, "Who waits there? Will *none* of you answer?" old Ann was standing by the wing, and seeing her mistress look toward her as she spoke those words, totally forgetting where she was, hobbled on the stage. "Here I be, my dear Miss Mary; I have brought the band-box. Here it is; do you want it?" The whole house burst into a loud laugh and clapping of hands. The old woman screamed with fright, and scuttled off as fast as she could. Mary was ready to sink with confusion, and when she came off, cried, "*Ann! Ann!* you have *ruined* me!" while Mr. Barlow called out, "Take that terrible old woman away, and

*smother* her ; or she'll be the death of her mistress." It required the greatest exertions of the performers to compose the audience to a consistent gravity, which Mary, by her uncommon energy, at length effected.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

FOR the first time in her life, Mary was seriously offended with Ann. The poor old woman felt very unhappy, while labouring under her mistress's displeasure, which lasted full two days, and no longer. Mary could not preserve resentment against one, who erred from ignorance, and who took for granted and reality, the fictitious business of the scene. "I can only pardon you, Ann," said Mary, "but on your promise either of wholly absenting yourself from the theatre, or confining yourself to my dressing-room in future; you have no idea of the mischief you might have occasioned. I would advise you at all events keep from the wings, and out of sight of the performers. I would not have Mr. Barlow, the acting manager, catch you, for the world; in his passion, he would certainly *kill* you."

"Aye, aye," cried Ann, "never fear, mistress; I'll keep out of harm's way; he is a great bear of a man, and these fellors

behind the screens, I believe, brought a carpet, and would have smothered me in earnest, but for a civil gentleman, who took me out of their wicked hands, and placed me in security, till you came down to me. Gad a mercy ! but they would have swung for it, if they had."

" Well, Ann, I must bring you to the green-room this morning, by order of the proprietors. You are to be tried before the company, for daring to run on the stage during the business : what punishment they will inflict on you, I know not ; but as you belong to *me*, you are considered as an attendant at the theatre, and must suffer accordingly. I am not joking, I assure you." Now the truth was, Mr. Barlow, who loved a joke, with the consent of the proprietors, begged of Mary to bring the old woman, that they might give her a proper caution, and threaten her a little with the consequences ; adding, " We shall hear what the old lady can say for herself : she will afford us a good laugh, for she seems a queer one." Mary consented, in the hope it would effectually deter her from coming to the theatre, unless to see her home.

" Well, Miss, I'll go with you," replied

Ann. “ I did no harm, and I’m not afeard of none of ’em, not I, but if they offer to mislest me, or any of their fellors lays a finger on me, I tell ’em a bit of my mind ; I will, by my truly.” Away the old dame went to make herself smart to attend her mistress ; and then they set out, and presently arrived at the theatre.”

The old woman was dressed out in her best, and to say truth, looked very respectably. Some of the men, carpenters and scene-shifters, cried out, “ make way ; here comes a *new performer*.” “ No,” cried others, “ we know *her*, she is an *old offender*. She is cast for *death* ; and brought up to receive sentence.” Several such jokes were thrown out, as she passed them, but Ann took no notice.

All the performers, ladies and gentlemen, were assembled, and all anxious to have a look at Ann, and enjoy her embarrassment. Mr. Barlow, who was disposed to make a comic scene, was however restrained by the consequential gravity of Mr. Day, who remarked it would be sufficient to give the old woman a gentle reprimand, and let her go ; that Miss Irwin was the principal sufferer, and that it would be a breach of decorum

and respect to that lady, to carry the joke to any extremity.

Old Ann was now brought in by Mr. Whimpey, the low comedian, who took her arm under his, crying, as they entered, "Trip, *Audrey*, trip ; bear your body seemingly." But she pushed him away, with "None of your freedom with me ; I'm none of your *tawdry* folk, I would have you to know."

"*Silence in the court!*" cried Barlow ; then turning to Ann with a stern look, "You have been sent for, old lady, to answer a very serious charge laid against you, of running on the stage, where you had no business whatever, and throwing the whole house, and all the performers, into uproar and confusion ; what say you ? do you deny the charge ? Speak."

"Marry forbid," cried Ann, "I should be so wicked to deny the truth ; I am not used to *lying*, like some folk ; tho'f I bes a poor woman, my broughtage-up was in an honest way ; but it was all along of my mistress calling so, and looking at me ; I portest and vow, I thought she wanted her band-box, for we forgot it, and I had been home to fetch it, and seeing nobody answer, as she

said, I did carry it on to her, saving your presence, and that's the truth on't. I scorn to tell a falsity: and where was the harm after all?"

"Harm!" exclaimed Barlow with a loud voice, to frighten her, "did you not hear the uproar you caused? You interrupted the business, and threw every thing into confusion and disorder. I wonder, they did not pull the house down."

"How is it possible for a poor woman like me," cried Ann, "to know when you are speaking *truth* or *lies*? Ah! you are a sad wicked set! and are made up of nothing else but idle stories and falsehoods; and then you throw up your eyes and wring your hands, and do it all as natural as the life, that you persuade other people to believe you, and be as great fools as yourselves. Ah! *Shame* upon you! to deceive the people so; it is a very sinful *wicked* practice! but you are used to it, and it is quite natural; and more's the pity, you have made my dear young lady as bad as the rest on you. She who always spoke truth before. Marcy be good to me! it was but t'other night, I just came, ready to see her home, and there she was, upon the ground! look-

ing like death, and telling a fierce hard-hearted lady, that she was dying for hunger, and hadn't eat a bit of food for *three days*, when I'll be upon my oath, I saw her eat a hearty breakfast that morning: and I roasted a nice pullet that day for her dinner with my own hands, and saw her dine on it: this is a sad and shameful thing to make my dear young mistress tell such *barefaced falsities*."

"How, woman!" cried the Manager, "take care what you say!"

"Fiddle-de-dee!" cried Ann, "I doesn't value your big looks a pin, not I. I speaks nothing but the honest *truth*, and I am neither afeard nor ashamed of it. Heaven forgive and mend you all! I say; and if it wasn't that my old hand shakes, and I *mispelder* the words so, I would write to our good Mrs. Forester, and the good Parson Percy, to take you from this wicked place, made up of nothing but lies. I think, I would by my faith and truly, that's what I would."

All the ladies now burst out a laughing, and even Mr. Day's gravity gave way, and he was obliged to put his handkerchief to his face to conceal his risibility. As soon



as he recovered his composure, he advanced to Ann, and accosted her, "as you have pleaded *guilty*, and voluntarily made confession, and by such, have recommended yourself to our mercy, we shall for the present withhold the merciless stern law from falling heavy on your aged head. We therefore only gravely admonish you, never to approach the scenes, on pain of exemplary and condign punishment; but in consideration of the very learned and elaborate defence you have made, and the very wholesome and salutary lecture you have given us, we should be sorry such eloquence did not meet its due reward; you will be pleased, my good old lady, to accept of this trifle, as some remuneration for your loss of time from your domestic duties; and we assure you, we shall not in haste forget the occurrence of this morning," and he put a one pound note in her hand.

"I humbly thank you, good Sir," returned Ann with a low curtsey; "I shall observe what you say; but I portest and vow, I only spoke for your good; and this bit of paper tells me, that my poor advice has made a proper oppression upon your patience."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Barlow, "you have sufficiently vindicated yourself and oppressed our patience, and now go home, my good woman; and roast another pullet for your mistress's dinner, and thank your stars, that you have escaped *smothering this time*."

"*Smothering!* heh, heh, heh. Well by my truly," replied Ann, "you are a funny man, to be sure; no, no, you know better nor that, I shoudn't take it so easy, as you think for; not I, by my troth! I am not to be frightened with squibs and crackers and big looks; no, not if you was as big as a house; no, no, and so your sarvant, good ladies and gentlemen: I humbly wish you all a good morning," and with another curtesy the old nurse left the theatre.

"That is a very tremendous and formidable old woman, Miss Irwin," said the Manager. "Where did you pick her up?"

"She has lived in our family, Sir, long before I was born."

"I confess," said Mr. Day, "I admire the simplicity of her character; her honest sincerity, and the very strong affection and attachment to her mistress."

"I could have had a nice comic scene with the old dame," cried Whimpey, "if you had permitted me."

“ I fancy,” replied Barlow, “ you would have come off *second* best. She would have given you as good as you brought.”

“ I warrant,” said Mrs. Downing, “ I like that old lady of all things. She is not afraid of speaking her mind.”

“ But really, Miss Irwin,” said Mr. Day, “ you must keep her from the house, unless to see you home at nights, or bring you what you want, and then immediately to depart.”

“ Certainly, Sir,” answered Mary. “ I have already seriously cautioned her on that head.”

Our Heroine in returning home, just as she reached her own door, and had knocked, perceived the two officers of Hussars on the opposite side ; they bowed to her, and she distantly returned the compliment, on which they both crossed over to her, and politely asked after her welfare, saying, “ it gave them great pleasure to see her in such good health, but extremely sorry to observe her always in mourning ! Mary informed them she had recently lost her sister, at which they were extremely sorry again, but particularly happy that their regiment was now quartered in the neighbourhood, as she

might depend on their exertions on her benefit night. Mary to get rid of them, thanked them ; but said, most probably she should not have that honour ; as she expected a letter shortly, relative to an engagement in London. The officers were much grieved at this ; but were highly rejoiced and gratified that such conspicuous talent as she possessed, was likely to meet its due reward.

Mary impatiently knocked again, and the door was opened by Margaret, the young nurse, with the infant in her arms. “ How is this, Miss Irwin ? ” said Lord Henry Augustus : “ you seem to have got an addition to your family ? ” Poor Mary coloured *crimson-deep*, and unable to reply, in confusion ran up stairs, leaving the nurse to shut the door. What passed she could not pretend to judge, but she for several days after, perceived these gentlemen, with several others of the corps, parading before her windows, and staring very rudely, she thought, laughing and pointing at the same time.

This at length alarmed her, and she called up Margaret to question her. She had, of late, remarked that Margaret had staid out, under pretence of airing the child, much

longer than was necessary ; for the infant had caught a severe cold ; on this, she resolved to speak to her on the subject. “ What makes you, nurse, keep the little infant out so long these cold days ? It is too tender as yet to bear this severe weather ; you see what a violent cold the poor babe has got.”

“ Indeed, Mrs.” replied Margaret, “ it is not my fault : those officers who were speaking with you keep watching and following me so, and axing such a power of questions about you and the child, that I am quite in a quandary what to say.”

“ What *did* you say, let me know,” said Mary peremptorily. “ They kept questioning and questioning whose it was ; and I only said it was a relation of my lady’s, an orphan child of your sister, you had taken out of compassion to nurse ;” and they laughed and said, “ a likely story indeed, that you would be troubled to travel about with it so ; but they know’d you very well a good while ago, in another place, a great distance off, and guessed whose it was ; and ax’d me if I know’d the father, if he was not a fine dashing gentleman, and a *barren knight* ; I tould them I know’d nothing about him, nor

never see'd him; and that I wouldn't answer any of their impertinent questions; upon which one of them pulled out his purse and gave me a guinea, and kissed the child, and said, 'you are a very prudent, discreet young woman, nurse; and you do right to keep your mistress's secrets; you will give her this letter from me. I know all about it,' cried he, 'and don't think the worse of her for it.' 'Why no to be sure, your honour,' says I; 'yet in case it was so, which I knows is not, she is not the *first* young lady that has met with a misfortin, not by many.' And so, Mistress, here is the letter; he gave it me yesterday, and a very nice civil spoken handsome gentleman he is; and I warrant very rich, for he had a purse full of golden guineas!"

Mary threw the letter from her with contempt. "I see, nurse, there is but one way to settle this: we must either *part*, or you must take the child to nurse a few miles into the country. I shall call on you once a week, for I now see the impropriety of having it so near me."

"Well, Mistress," said Margaret, "which you please for that. I am not obligated to go out to sarvice. I expects my good

man home soon from the wars ; and I only took the bairn to oblige old Ann ; and so I will go with it to the country for a bit, till you provides another nurse. I am sure I have plague enough about it ;” and away she went, muttering something that Mary could not well understand.

“ Would to Heaven !” exclaimed Mary, when she was alone, “ that I had followed the counsel of those worthy friends, and had left this infant under their fostering care : it would have been perhaps, better attended to ; the expence, though heavy, is not an object of present consideration ; but I see it gives the tongues of ignorance, calumny, and depravity too great a latitude to asperse me. I will remove the cause to a distance, and malevolent rumour may cease to torment me. This officer doubtless suspects my conduct, or why address me ? I will see what this letter contains ; she took it up and opened it.” It breathed the warmest professions of unalterable attachment ! lamented the perfidy and desertion of Sir *George Dashington* ; applauded her taste and discernment in rejecting the overtures of the Honourable *William Neville*, with whom no woman of sense could be happy : but hoped

a more *favourable* reception to *his* suit, as he would overlook the little *venial slip* her too generous confidence in a villain had occasioned ; and which his whole life and fortune would most willingly repair, by devoting both to her exclusive service. Such was the purport of this elegant epistle, from the enamoured Lord Henry Augustus Whitaker !

The letter dropped upon the floor ! She clasped her hands in agony. “Just Heaven !” she exclaimed, “am I indeed then fallen so low ! How have I deserved this unwarrantable insult ? Oh ! Edward ! Edward ! were *you* here, my brother ! he would not dare thus to asperse your poor defenceless sister ! I have now no friend to direct, none to counsel or assist me ! Dark slander has beset me ! My spotless fame, the life-blood of my existence, is stained with base suspicion, which nothing can remove. Is it thus a religious adherence to a sacred promise I gave a penitent, and dying sister, is repaid ? and am I *thus, thus rewarded* ? Oh ! cruel ! cruel !” Her head drooped, she sighed convulsively, and she would have inevitably fallen, had not a copious shower of tears providentially come to her relief.



In this distressing situation old Ann found her young mistress, as she brought her up a letter, which the postman's double knock had announced. "Oh dear me!" cried the old woman, "what is the matter, my sweet Miss Mary: why do I see you thus? What has happened?"

"I wish you, Ann, to look out for another nurse for this child, I think her not only careless of its health, but I disapprove of her conduct in other respects: she is too much given to gadding and talking of what don't concern her; she is moreover dissatisfied with her situation; so the sooner she is gone the better,"

"I hope, Madam, she has not dared to be rude or impudent. If she has, I'll give it to her soundly and roundly. The saucy minx! She has turned up her nose at me, more than once, but I don't mind that; but to behave misbecoming you, is quite unbearable. She shall have it when I get down as hot as she can sup it, I promise her. She must have said something improper, to throw you into tears."

"You mistake, Ann. It is this infant which perplexes, and distresses me. Would I had left it under Mrs. Forester's care;

she would have provided a proper nurse, and looked to its welfare ; it must be moved from hence, a mile or two from the town, and that immediately ; my reputation is at stake, Ann ; and dear as the infant is to me, my character is dearer still.”

“ Ah, the Lord help us !” exclaimed Ann ; “ there is no putting an old head on young shoulders, and more’s the pity. I thought all along the misfortunate babe would bring no luck with it ; but it wasn’t for the likes of me to put in my oar, when the dear Mrs. Forester, and the Parson Percy could not prevail on you. I’ll look far and near for a farm-house and nurse for the baby ; and then we’ll send Mrs. Margery a packing, with a murrain to her ; pise upon her for a saucy slut !”

The old woman had not been long below, before Mary heard high words between her and Margaret. If the old woman was loud, the young nurse was still louder. “ I doesn’t want to stay. I was a fool to leave my home and friends, to dangle after such as you, belike ; to nurse a *brat*, nobody knows. You would have it a great secret indeed ! but I knows *more* nor you thinks for ; mistress need not be afeard nor

ashamed, if it be an honesty got child. I bes a lawful wife, and I doesn't understand nursing of *b*——” The opprobrious term was lost in something which fell; for while the infant was in the cradle alone, and asleep, and the two women at it below, the old nurse had complimented the young one with throwing something at her, which she narrowly escaped. Mary rang the bell to separate the parties.

“A saucy baggage!” cried old Ann, as she hobbled up in a great pucker.

“Ann,” said Mary, in an angry tone, “have you forgot yourself? I will on no account suffer this; set off directly to the next village, and look for a lodging for this woman and the child, till you can provide another in her room. You must no longer continue together; what must the woman of the house suppose?” Ann immediately put on her things, and set out in quest, as she was ordered.

Mary was just going to open the letter, when two gentle taps at her door called her attention. “May I come in, Madam?”

“By all means, Mrs. Larkins!” Her landlady entered. “What is your pleasure?”

“I beg a thousand pardons, Miss Irwin,”

said Mrs. Larkins ; “ but I hope you will excuse my freedom, if I mention the many quarrels and bickerings I have been a disagreeable witness to, between your domestics : they cannot agree ; and though I am not very particular in these matters, my husband don’t approve of it at all ; he can’t be disturbed, he says ; and so, Madam, I am very sorry to be the messenger, but he has desired me to request you will be so good as to look out for another lodging. I assure you, Miss, it goes much against me to be the messenger, but my husband insists.”

“ Oh, certainly,” replied Mary ; “ make no apology : the cause will be removed, for I am going to send the nurse away, and the child, into the country.”

“ Yes, Miss,” returned her landlady. “ I think for that matter you do very right ; and I wish for your *own* sake, you had not brought the infant with you. To be sure, as I told my husband, you know your own concerns best. There may be private reasons for your keeping your marriage *secret*, for I should be sorry to credit any scandalous whispers that are handed about ; but it was not prudent indeed, Miss Irwin, be the case as it may, to give the world an

opportunity to talk ; it is really getting my house an indifferent name, as my husband says ; though I will say, ever since you have been *here*, you have behaved in the most *discreet* manner, as any lady can conduct herself. I will say that for you, go where you will."

" I will remove to-morrow then," sighed Mary. " I should be sorry the character of your house should suffer on my account." Mary's pride was wounded by Mrs. Larkins's manner, which conveyed even more than her words, and she scorned to enter into an explanation, and only repeated, " at all events, I will remove to-morrow."

" I thank you if you will, Miss, for Mr. Larkins is a very particular man, and much against my letting the apartments to players, who keep such late hours ; besides, he don't like to see officers, walking up and down before his windows, and pointing so, it don't look *pretty* ; and as he was coming home to dinner the other day, he saw one of them kiss the child, and give the nurse a guinea, and a letter for you, for he heard your name mentioned : now all this, my husband says, don't look well, and must hurt the credit of the house, though I as-

sured him you had no followers; but he shook his head and said, you knew better than to do that; but that he wanted the apartments for an old gentleman and his wife, who lodged with us two years ago; and who are expected in a day or two; and so, as I said, he begs you will provide."

"He need not be uneasy; I shall sleep in your house but this night: and so you may acquaint your husband;" and Mary rose from her seat; and Mrs. Larkins with a curtesy left the room. "I am now," cried our poor Heroine, "in a more perplexing predicament than ever. Where can I go? and if Ann cannot succeed to settle this infant in the country, what reputable family will now receive us? Mrs. Larkins will not recommend me. I cannot expect it; how then shall I turn me? I will consult Mr. Day; he will perhaps advise me. I have no time to read letters now: business of more consequence calls me." She locked the letter up, after breaking the seal, and perceiving it came from Miss Thompson. She then prepared to wait upon Mr. Day.

That gentleman was surprised at her visit. "To what am I indebted, Miss Irwin, for

this honour? favour me with your commands." Mary candidly related to him the occurrence that had passed.

"It is really a most distressing circumstance," said Mr. Day gravely, "and you now evidently see the imprudence of incumbering yourself with your little nephew, Madam. The world, believe me, will not credit the motives which actuate you in respect to the child, but impute them to a much stronger and *closer* tie; and which, even were it so, your situation, as a *public* character, Miss Irwin, ought to withhold you from evincing. I am glad you are determined to remove it from your presence; there is no time to be lost. It is unlucky that these officers recognized you. They are in general men of free principles, and think themselves at liberty to address ladies of the profession; and knowing this child to be with you, adds a mystery, and renders your character, you must pardon my frankness, somewhat equivocal in their eyes. Though I am perfectly convinced of the rectitude of your principles, a censorious public will not give you equal credit. *The world is fond of any tale, that feeds its appetite for scandal.* I will procure you

proper apartments for *yourself* and your old servant; but the *nurse* and *child* will be *inadmissible*."

Mary thanked him, and returned home, where she anxiously waited for the arrival of old Ann. She was now in some respects eased in her mind, as to lodgings for herself; but she was in great trepidation lest Ann should meet with a disappointment. It was fortunate she had not to perform that night, nor the next; so she contented herself as well as she could, till the old woman came back, which was not till late in the evening. She was quite exhausted when she entered.

"Alack-a-day, my dear Miss Mary," cried Ann: "I fear I have had my walk for my pains; there is no end to this town, I believe; go ever so far into the country, it is all houses and smoky streets. I have tramp'd and tramp'd till my old bones ache again; and all to no purpose, I fear, they axes such a power of money."

"Never mind the money, Ann," said Mary. "Can you get a lodging for the nurse *anywhere*? that is the point: for we must quit here to-morrow!



“*To-morrow!*” cried Ann, “goodness me! why in such haste?”

“Ask no questions,” returned her Mistress; “but answer me; have you succeeded or not?”

“There is a small but indifferent room, at a cotton weaver’s, about a mile and a half from the town; and there is a bit of a garden behind, but they are very poor folks, and have a number of squalling childer; and then they axes six shillings for a place, where you can scarce turn round in.”

“No matter, it must do for the present; why don’t you tell me, have you taken, and engaged it?” asked Mary.

“Why, no, to be sure, I have not,” replied the old woman. “I went farther up and down. I wanted to get a wet-nurse in the room of Margaret; but I can’t, far or near as yet; we may though in a fortnight or month’s time, if we look sharp out; and then they want to know, whose the child is, and I said what was it to them, if they were paid.”

“We must take a coach, the first thing in the morning, and bring Margaret and the child with us to the weaver’s; I must settle

her there, at any price or rate. Are they *civil* people?"

"Not much of that, by my truly," answered Ann; "they are very prying and inquisitive, and say it will put them out of their way; but as the money would be an object to their family, they will shift as they can: but that is the only spare room they had, and bad enough it is; and Margaret, I know, will never put up with the inconvenience."

"I shall not consult her liking or disliking," said Mary. "I have other things to trouble me; so bring a hackney coach to the top of the street by nine in the morning; and do you, and nurse get into it, and I will immediately follow, and we shall all three drive to the weaver's; you can direct the coachman where it is."

"Aye! aye!" said Ann, "never fear me; so I'll tell the nurse to get her box and the child's things ready; and off we'll set in the morning." So the old woman went to prepare Margaret, who received the intelligence with no great satisfaction.

About nine o'clock, after breakfast, Ann ordered a coach to be in waiting; she told

the man where to drive, and Margaret took her box, &c. while Ann carried the infant. Mr. Larkins was just quitting his house to return to the factory, while Mary spoke a few words to his wife; telling her, she would be back to dinner, if any person called.

She then followed her attendants, the coach was waiting, and she saw the nurse and child and old Ann get into it. She had just reached it, when to her surprise, Lord Henry Augustus of the Hussars passed her on horseback; he sprung from the saddle and instantly went up to her. "Where are you going, Miss Irwin, thus early? Did you not receive a letter from me?"

"I did, Sir," replied Mary, indignation flashing in her countenance, which turned to scarlet, "and treated it, as such an insult deserved, committed it to the flames."

"That was cruel, Miss Irwin, when it required your serious consideration."

"It required no consideration, my lord," said Mary. "Let go my hand, Sir, I insist; I am upon business; begone, my lord, or I will call for assistance."

"Well, Madam," returned his lordship, "as you please; but give me leave to ob-

serve this prudery is over-strained, and totally unnecessary: however, you will think better of it; let me hand you in, and wish you a good morning." Mary refused, and without reply, hurried into the vehicle; when his lordship whispering the coachman, and giving his horse to his servant, to her utter astonishment and confusion, jumped into the coach, and instantly drew up the blinds, the coachman now drove off quite fast, and rattled over the pavement.

Old Ann screamed, and both Mary and she would have let down the blinds and opened the door, and jumped out at the risk of their necks; but his lordship prevented them. "Excuse me, Miss Irwin, I cannot part from you thus. I am at least determined to find you out where you are moving to; and then I shall be satisfied; I mean nothing farther, so you need not be alarmed." Mary burst into tears.

All this transaction attracted Mr. Larkins's notice, who had stopped, and, with others, beheld the whole proceeding.

The old woman during the ride, exhausted all the opprobrious terms she could vent on his lordship, and called all the saints in the calendar to witness, that she would have him

before his betters for this treatment ; but this officer was not to be intimidated with such language, and calmly replied, “ Wait, my good dame, till you see the event, and put your threats in execution, when you see there is occasion ; be patient, till then.”

The carriage soon arrived at the place, and his lordship jumped out. In handing Mary out, “ I shall just see, what can bring you to such a place, and then be assured I shall leave you.”

Mary, quite overcome, made no other answer than, “ if you are a gentleman, you will desist from this unavailing and unmanly persecution.”

She and her attendants now entered the house, followed by his lordship ; the weaver and his wife, now stood bowing and curtseying, and bustling about. Mary in a few words settled the terms ; his lordship slipped another guinea into Margaret’s hand, who now appeared quite pleased. This military hero now telling the man and woman to behave with attention and respect, mounted his horse, and he and his servant galloped off, and were out of sight in a minute, to Mary’s infinite satisfaction. She now agreed to pay a guinea per week for Margaret’s board

and lodging; every thing was to be found her clean and comfortable; so the nurse now seemed quite contented, and the weaver and his wife, with many profound scrapes and curtsies, thanked our Heroine, and she and old Ann got into the coach, and promised to do every thing in their power to accommodate their new guest.

Mary discharged the coach, before she got home, and Ann and she reached her door about two o'clock. Mrs. Larkins opened it, and looked rather glum. "Mr. Day has been here enquiring for you, and has left this note. I told him I expected you home to dinner; but my husband said that could not well be, for he saw you and the old woman, the nurse and child get into a coach, and an officer along with you, and the coach drove off like mad."

"I have been to settle the nurse and child," said Mary, much confused at Mrs. Larkins's words and manner.

"I hope, *Madam*," returned the landlady, "you have got a place for yourself; for I have let your apartments. I don't approve of such proceedings."

"Nor do I," said Mary; "but I could explain, and clear myself."

“ I want no explanation, not I,” said Mrs. Larkins sharply : “ the thing is clear as day, as my husband says : he don’t like such goings on at all ; and the sooner you quit the better.”

“ Here is your week’s rent, Madam ; and I shall leave your house, as soon as I have taken some refreshment.”

“ Do so,” said the woman of the house with an air, as she returned to her parlour.

Mary, when she got up stairs, opened the note, and found Mr. Day had procured her apartments at Mr. Dunn’s, an Irishman, who lived a good distance off : thither she went as soon as possible, and by six o’clock in the evening her luggage was removed ; and Mary with the old attendant, sat down in her new lodgings.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

THE apartments which Mr. Day had kindly provided, were small, but neatly furnished ; they consisted of a sitting and bedroom, and closet, with the use of a kitchen : very reasonable for the town, no more than fourteen shillings per week. Mary was very well satisfied. Ann drank tea with her mistress ; the old woman was quite in a pucker and fidget, from the occurrences of the day. “ I portest and vow, Mistress, I will complain of this lord officer, whatever he is, to a magistrate, for his impudent misbehaviour ; that I will. I’ll bind him over, for all his laced jacket. And as for Mr. Larkins and his wife, they are no great things themselves, or they would not give ear, nor credit such false treachery. If we hadn’t left them so soon, I would have given her her own, that I would, to dare to talk to you, my sweet Miss Mary, in such a provoking manner. But a good riddance of her, I say.”

“ A good riddance of that Lord Henry,



and his companions I devoutly pray, Ann ; for I shall have no peace till then. But if you have any regard or compassion for me, Ann," added Mary, " let the matter rest for the present. If he continue his insulting conduct, I will myself seek redress. So, say no more, I beg."

Mrs. Dunn now begged leave to come in. She was a nice pleasant little woman, and of a very mild disposition.

" I beg pardon, Madam," said she ; " but I hope you find every thing to your liking. I shall be happy to serve you with any little articles in the grocery line ; you shall have them as cheap and as good as the best shop in town can furnish. Mr. Dunn has an opportunity of getting the best, as he rides sometimes for one or two principal houses in the wine and spirit line and tea way. But that is not what brings me now. Mr. Dunn is just come home, and hearing you was come, is quite delighted, for he is a great play-goer, and admires you of all things. So nothing will satisfy him, if you don't oblige him, and sup with us to-night. We shall have a nice roast fowl, and a bit of choice ham and brocoli, and an apple-pudding."

" You must excuse me, Mrs. Dunn,"

Mary replied. "I feel myself fatigued, and shall retire to rest very soon! So, present my best respects to your husband——"

"Oh dear, Miss! I durst not take him such a message for the world; he is the best natured soul that can be, and he has only one fault."

"What is that?" asked Mary.

"Why, you must know, Miss, he has the misfortune to be an *Irishman*, and apt to get a little tipsy now and then; and then he is very obstinate, and will have his humour, and I must not cross him for the life; but he is very good, and a kind husband after all. So, my dear Miss, pray oblige him and me for this once, and you may retire as soon as you like. Supper will be ready at nine."

"Well, Mrs. Dunn, I will wait upon you in half an hour."

"I thank you kindly, Miss: you will so please him, you can't think, and your old woman must come too, if you please."

"No, thank you, Mistress," said Ann; "I have many things to get ready; so you must excuse me."

"Well, then," said Mrs. Dunn, "I'll bring you up a plate of something nice; I insist upon it." And away the good wo-

man hurried down stairs, to inform her husband.

“ May I never squint !” exclaimed Ann, “ but I likes these good people much ; there is something open and hearty about them : and as for his being *Irish*, sure there is no great sin in that, if he don’t get *drunk*, and makes a *ninny* of himself, as too many on ’em do.”

“ Well, here is the key, and lay out my night-dress, and see every thing ready against I go to rest.—I shall look over this letter, and then wait on Mr. and Mrs. Dunn.” She took the letter from her pocket, and perused the welcome contents from her young friend, Miss Thompson.

It was not long ; it gave a brief account of her quitting Mr. P——, on good terms, and her engagement at Bath, where she was likely to prove a favourite. Among other matters, she said, she had seen Sir George Dashington and Miss Emerson driving through the city in high style ; that they resided at Cliffden, but passed as *man* and *wife*, by the name of *Campbell*, as West Indians of great fortune ; that Doctor Emerson had come for the waters, being afflicted with a heavy paralytic complaint ; on which

his daughter and her paramour had immediately decamped. "But now prepare for more agreeable intelligence," said this worthy girl. "Who should accidentally pass me in the Grove yesterday but Major Emerson. He stopped, and we had a long conference. I will not say, he inquired after *you*; no, to be sure; it was solely on my own dear account I was honoured with his conversation; so all-attractive am I become, my dear. But you shall hear. He told me, he had just arrived from the continent, on news of his father's illness, who has had a third attack within this week, and is not expected to live many days. The *Colonel*, for he has been promoted, then expressly told me, when that melancholy event took place, and decency would permit, he would again venture to lay himself and a fortune of eight hundred per annum, independent of his commission, once more at your feet, in which he would be joined by personal intercession of your *brother*, who was expected over in less than a month, and is raised to the rank of *Major*. Now, my dear girl, let me entreat you to weigh well this most eligible and honourable offer; you know not how ardently he adores you; he thinks you

*purity* itself. The tears suffused his manly cheeks, and I am almost in love with him myself for his unalterable attachment to you. ‘I excuse the sweet girl’s rigid principles,’ said he to me, ‘when she hinted in her letter to her brother, that *recent circumstances* had occurred, which rendered a union between us ineligible: I knew what she rather cruelly adverted to, my unfortunate sister’s conduct; I cannot blame her; that sister has for ever disgraced me. The more I reflect on this humiliation, the more exalted, Miss Thompson, does your friend Miss Irwin appear in my eyes. Do you correspond? Where is she now? In the same circuit?’ I told, and gave him your address, and we parted. Now, Mary, the crisis of your fate approaches; your brother will soon be over, and, I sincerely wish, may enforce your compliance on his friend’s behalf. Who knows, but there may be shortly a change in *both* our conditions? There is a person here, an old squire of mine, who has renewed his addresses; the fellow is well enough, and fool enough, to think me an angel. Heaven help the silly man! he’ll find me a very woman; but I wish he had more *rosin* to his *bow*, for he is a musician and

*teacher*, and second-violin in our orchestra. So, my dear, we may probably be noosed before the year is out. My mother begs her kind regards.

“Yours, ever,

“S. THOMPSON.”

This letter, far from being pleasing, only added to poor Mary's anxiety. She hoped the arrival of her brother might be deferred, at least, till the company moved to their next quarters; yet again, she thought his presence would preserve her from insult, as it certainly would if he condescended to *notice* her. But again here she almost despaired, from the tenor of his last letter: in short, her spirits were quite harrassed with different conjectures, and perplexing doubts, when she heard Mr. Dunn's voice at the foot of the stairs. “If you ar'nt able to walk down, Miss, I must turn *Irish chairman*, and make a *sedan* of my arms, my dear.”

Mary, glad of a little respite from her distracted ideas, immediately obeyed the summons, and was ushered into a very neat back parlour, where the cloth was laid for supper, and some cake and wine on the side-board. Mr. Dunn immediately filled out

three bumpers, and handing them, with the cake, to his young guest, and to his wife, took the third, saying, "Here is towards your very good health, my dear, and to our better acquaintance. If you are any ways akin to Sir John Irwin, who was once a general and commander-in-chief in Ireland, and who died long before you was born, I give you great joy of your name, for you come of a big family; my father knew him well; he wore a star on his breast, and was a tip-top warrior. You must have heard talk of my father, ould Larry Dunn, the great German flute player, in Bishop's-street, Dublin, who kept the sign of the Cat and Bagpipes. There was not a player in all Ireland, but what knew Larry Dunn: his fame is gone from Derry to Dover. But rest his soul, he is gone too! he died one day about thirty years ago. He lived too fast. Playing the flute is very dry work, and he wet his whistle once too often. Och hone! here's to his memory." And Mr. Dunn wiped his eyes, and drank another large bumper to drown his grief.—He was a tall, stout, boney man about forty years, with a broad Irish countenance, in which arch humour and eccentricity seemed blended; it

was easy to perceive he had taken a cheerful glass, but not too much, for it only made him a little too talkative.

“Come, Miss, sit down; and let us chat a bit,” said Dunn, drawing a chair for Mary and himself to the fire, which he stirred up: “and so, you are a cousin of the late Sir John?”

“I do not really know, Sir,” answered Mary.

“Pho! you must be, agra; to be sure, the Irwins are not quite as great, nor so numerous as the Duns are, at the present day.”

“No, I’ll answer for that,” said the wife; “there are more of them than people wish for: you come, Mr. Dunn, of a very impertinent and importunate family, many persons think.”

“Hould your tongue, Mrs. Dunn,” replied the husband; “I am come of a very *creditable* family you must know.”

“*Credulous* you mean, if I may judge by you, Mr. Dunn; you have more faith in your customers’ promises than I should have; and what is the consequence? Arn’t you continually on foot after them, to get your money?”



“Why faith and troth, that’s a sure thing, Mrs. Dunn, my dear. Och! bad manners to you; I’m up to your gossip; you’re punning upon my *name*. Well, and *you* need not talk, for I take care to keep all the *Duns* from our door, but myself.”

“So you do, my dear,” said the wife smiling, “and so you ought; for you know *you* are plague enough to me at times.”

“Not very often, Mrs. Dunn; you will own that, my sugar-plum.”

“Too often for your own health, my dear Lawrence.”

“Pho! botheration! ’tis all in the way of good fellowship; you can’t howsomever, call me *lazy* Lawrence, for no man is up *earlier* and *later* about his business than myself.”

“That’s a sure thing,” said his wife, laughing.

“Won’t you take my part, Miss Irwin?” asked Mr. Dunn: “this mistress of mine is too much for me.”

“I think, Sir,” replied Mary, “you are quite able to take up the cudgels in your own defence.”

“Och, faith,” returned Dunn, “if you mean the *stick*, I am a dab at that. I have a

nice sprig of shillelah in the corner yonder, at your sarvice, Miss, any time."

"I thank you, Mr. Dunn," said Mary, laughing, "but I must decline the acceptance of so weighty an obligation."

"Troth, I'm in earnest, my dear: it is not fit you should go and come home late by yourself from the play-house."

"Old Ann, Sir, always sees me home."

"Pho! nonsense, you may as well have an old cat to see you home; she could do nothing but scratch. So, with your leave, I'll wait for your coming out from the theatre every night, and tuck you under one arm, and my shillelah under the other, and then let me see who'll say *parsnips* to you. If any of these officers about town should attempt to be rumbunctious with you, I'll make bould to draw a little of their mad claret for them."

"I should be very sorry, Mr. Dunn," returned Mary, "you should bring yourself into any trouble upon my account."

"Never you fear for that, Miss. These officers are all afraid of meeting one of my name. I warrant they'll run at the sight of me."

Mary then thankfully and cheerfully accepted his friendly offer.

Supper was now brought in.

Mr. Dunn carved, and helped Mary plentifully.

“ I hope you will do justice to my marketing ; for I think I’m a good judge of poultry, Miss : and as for the ham, it is my mistress’s own curing. But don’t take her word for it ; give me your opinion.”

Mrs. Dunn cut off a leg, and piece of the breast, some ham with some apple-pudding, and carried it up, with a mug of beer, to the old woman. Mary supped very heartily ; every thing was excellent ; and having chatted half an hour with her kind host and hostess, rose and politely wished them a good night.

Mary slept better than she expected. The reception she had met with in this new lodging, was more cordial than she had received at any other, not excepting Mrs. Howard’s. She was well pleased at the reflection, that she had an able protector from insult in the athletic form of the sturdy Mr. Dunn, whose prowess and honest courage there was little room to doubt. She hoped, therefore, Lord Henry would give over all further pursuit as a fruitless effort ; and the child being now removed, she trust-

ed the tongue of slander would restrain its malignant venom, and find some *other* object for detraction.

She arose more cheerful the next morning, and at the usual hour went to rehearsal. The eyes of all were turned on her : Mrs. Blinkworth sneered and turned up her nose ; Miss Dashwold drew herself up and tossed her head ; Mrs. Downing took snuff, but silently made room for her. Mr. Day looked grave and bowed very distantly ; Mr. Lilac passed her unnoticed, contrary to his usual politeness ; and Mr. Barlow knit his brows with severity, when she caught his eye. All this convinced her, the unfortunate affair of the coach had got wind, and lost nothing by the carriage. She was obliged to summon all her fortitude to go through her scenes ; and she now dreaded her public appearance at night.

The house was very full ; it was *The School for Scandal*. When Mary came on in *Lady Teazle*, a few *hisses* were heard. She paused ; she trembled ; she curtsied ; still the hisses continued, till they were overpowered by the hands of applause in opposition. She proceeded, and went tolerably through the scene ; but through the whole

play she could not muster up the energy and fire and the spirit she usually displayed. And she never received less plaudits ; for she never less deserved them.

As she returned to the green-room, Atall passed her with a look, and spouted aloud,

‘ Thus *conscience* doth make cowards of us all.’

“ *Hem !*” cried Mrs. Blinkworth ; “ but the consciousness of our *innocence*, Atall, should support us.”

“ Especially,” added Miss Dashwold, “ when we have the *military* for our *friends*, for there are many of them here to-night.”

“ They seem to be very quiet spectators,” said Atall.

“ I have not seen Lord Henry here these three nights ; what’s become of him ?” asked Miss Dashwold.

“ Perhaps that lady can inform you,” replied Mrs. Blinkworth, looking full at Mary ; “ but I dare say he is out of the town, and taken up with his young son. He is remarkably fond of it, for he has been seen publicly to kiss and caress the child. Every body says it is like him.”

Mary had heard too much ; she retired immediately to her dressing-room, and prepared to go home. At the stage-door she found Mr. Dunn waiting to escort her.

As they proceeded, she perceived she was followed by a gentleman, but the sound of iron-heeled boots proclaimed him a military man, though muffled up. He passed close by her, then turned and looked, and passed her again. Mary knew him to be Lord Henry, though thus disguised, and she trembled lest he should accost her, and words might ensue between him and Mr. Dunn. However, he spoke not, but retired ; she was now doubly glad of her landlord's protection. And they reached home without any molestation whatever.

Mary passed a very restless night. She found by her reception in public, that her character was injured, she feared irreparably, in the estimation of the town ; of course, that her benefit would suffer. That was of no consequence to her, nor were the taunts and sneers of the performers of that moment now, had not such apparent circumstances given colour to their slanderous insinuations. She had seen, in the short time she had been in the profession, enough of actors and ac-

tresses, to know that they are far less merciful to each other than to strangers ; that where superior merit appears, or different interests clash so very frequently, fear, opposition, envy, and calumny, and every baleful passion is roused, and set to work to compass their own individual ends, to the loss of their opponent's character and pocket : therefore their good or ill opinion no other way affected her, than as it served to keep alive the embers, which might otherwise die away, and be forgotten. One time she thought of throwing up her engagement, and returning to Mrs. Forester's, and settle the infant under the care of that worthy lady ; but she recollected she was under two hundred pounds forfeiture, if she quitted before her year expired, unless with the consent of the proprietors, which she saw no likelihood of obtaining, as she drew great houses : again she thought such a step would argue conscious *guilt*, and but decidedly *confirm* suspicion, already to appearance too well founded ; and to send the child now back, without previously apprising her benefactress, and ill as the infant really was, would be highly imprudent ; nor could such a step now, do away the aspersions already circu-

lated to her prejudice. The storm, she flattered herself, was now at its height, and she must weather its fury, till it subsided.

Reflecting thus seriously, she sat down and wrote to Mrs. Forester, informing her, that she had repented her ill-judged obstinacy in not listening to the prudent foresight of her best friends; but that circumstances had now convinced her of her error, and she had placed the nurse and child at a convenient distance out of town, where she could occasionally see to its welfare; and was now willing, as soon as the infant recovered from its indisposition, to send it back with the nurse, who was anxious to return; if her good friends would condescend to pardon her past opposition to their sentiments, and have an eye to the little orphan. She then gave an account of her reception at the theatre, &c. and finally informed her, that she had news of her brother, who was made a *major*, and was expected in England in the course of a very few weeks.

She sealed, and hastily dispatched this short letter: her mind was too much agitated, to enter into a more minute detail, nor did she think it altogether necessary to disclose the whole truth. The fact was, she was



ashamed to unfold the untoward embarrassment and perplexity, her incautious and persevering obstinacy had so unfortunately produced.

In about a week afterwards, as she was leaving the morning's rehearsal, the stage-keeper put a large packet, carefully sealed and tied round with red tape, into her hand: it came from *London* by the coach, and was *carriage paid*. Mary paid the portorage, and brought the parcel home with her. She was at a loss to conjecture from whom such a packet could come. She knew nobody in the metropolis, and had no correspondence there; she examined the seals, observed the initials "*W. F.*" over which was a "*coronet, and armed hand and dart,*" for the crest. This puzzled her, and she hesitated to open it, fearful it might be some contrivance to involve her in fresh trouble. At length her curiosity got the better of her timidity; and she broke open the parcel. It contained a MS. tragedy, and a letter was enclosed, which proved it came from *Counsellor Forester*. This was a sudden surprise: she felt her cheeks glow, her hand trembled, and she laid it down awhile, till

she recovered from her flurry. She now recollected, when at Sir William Rosebury's, he had promised to send her his tragedy for her opinion, when he had finished it ; but little thought he could have completed it in so short a time. She now took it up, and perused the welcome hand-writing ; which ran thus :

“ Dear Madam,

“ I have taken the liberty, according to promise, of encroaching on your more important time, by enclosing a MS. for your inspection and candid opinion : you will, doubtless, find it full of errors, as I have hastily penned it. Every piece, I know from experience, is materially altered and curtailed at the different rehearsals, before it is fit to meet the public eye ; and even then, its success is often dubious. As the heroine is written with a view to display your eminent talents, it is necessary that I should have your judgment thereon. You are certainly more acquainted with *stage effect* than I can possibly be ; and the favour I have to intreat, is, that you will deal freely and candidly ; point out the defects, which, I

know, are many ; and likewise suggest those improvements that your superior judgment, so conversant with theatricals, may think necessary : let no false delicacy towards *me*, withhold your *severe* and *impartial* criticism ; the more rigorous it is, the more I shall esteem the obligation. Consider, my dear Miss Irwin, your own reputation is involved as much as mine, in the eventual success of the piece ; for I have the infinite pleasure and satisfaction to announce to you that I have procured you a situation at *either* of the winter theatres, which-ever you think proper to accept. My interest, I am happy to say, is efficient in *both* ; and on your own decision will it rest.

“ You see, my dear Madam, what a selfish fellow I am grown. I take an *interest* in serving you ; so you see our *interests* are *inseparable* in the present instance : and I have had the arrogant presumption to hint a wish in a late letter to my aunt, that they may finally prove so, and be so closely. I dare not be more explicit at present, lest, in your just indignation, you throw my MS. into your fire ; and thus my vanity, my hopes, and future happiness perish, and all evaporate *in fumo*. Trusting, however, to

that heavenly benignity which beams from your intelligent eyes, I will confess I am the most impudent as well as most selfish man breathing, in subscribing myself,

“ With unalterable esteem,

“ Your sincere friend and *admirer*,

“ WILLIAM FORESTER.”

“ Lincoln’s Inn Square.”

We shall not attempt to depict our heroine’s feelings on this (to her) most important letter. The MS. and the official intelligence this epistle contained, were, in themselves, sufficient to flatter the vanity of any actress, and elevate her hopes to the very pinnacle of expectant celebrity : but all these aspiring thoughts vanished before the *flattering* prospect her fluttering heart whispered was in evident preparation. The words “ *interests;*” “ *inseparable;*” “ *finally prove so, and be so closely;*” “ *dare not be more explicit;*” “ *hinted to my aunt;*” and the concluding word “ *admirer,*” marked emphatically, threw poor Mary, the woe-worn and persecuted Mary, into such a train of ideas, that the scoffs, the sneers, and rebuffs she had met with, were now considered “ *trifles light as air,*” when “ *proofs, as strong as*

*Holy Writ*," informed her, that the man, the only man who had ever *interested* her heart, had now almost *directly* avowed, that that *interest* he wished to consider as *inseparable*. "How? for life," thought she: "vain creature that I am! I cannot, must not, flatter myself, that such a man, so—so—all accomplished; so—so—every way amiable; and but hush, my foolish, flattering heart! it is a happiness too great to be realized."

## CHAPTER XXX

THREE weeks had elapsed, since Margaret with the child was settled with the weaver and his family, not two miles from the town; old Ann was generally sent twice a week to enquire after its health, the infant continued very ill from the hooping-cough, and a doctor attended it: this account naturally excited in Mary the deepest concern, and she determined to pay it a private visit, and not being called on to perform, for the remainder of the week, she had a couple of leisure days to spare, which she accordingly dedicated to that purpose.

The medical gentleman, whom Shuttleworth the weaver called in, was a young man, coming into practice, very skilful, very attentive, and very anxious to extend his practice, by pretending to much more than he really had. He was likewise by nature highly inquisitive; and under assumed consequence and professional importance, must be previously informed of the rank and condition

of his patients, and then he regulated his attentions proportionately.

The infant being taken very ill in the night, Margaret the nurse became quite alarmed; and the weaver had no sooner got up to his loom, than she begged him to run for a doctor in all haste, lest the child should be strangled in a fit of coughing.

The poor man, more anxious perhaps than the nurse, and fearful he should lose so good a lodger, which brought him a regular guinea a week, set off in a hurry, before it was quite light, and rang violently at the bell, which conspicuously hung at the shop of this young Galen.

The Doctor, ever awake to a call of business, popped his head out of his window, and asked who wanted him?

“ Oh! Sir, come with me immediately,” cried the weaver. “ I have a child dying, I think, at my house.”

“ Pho! pho! man, why do you disturb me? You know I can't spare time to attend such as *you*. My time is *precious*. Take your child to the dispensary, and you'll get advice *gratis*!”

“ Oh! dear Doctor, it is not *mine*, I assure you,” said the applicant.

“ Whose is it, then ? Be quick and tell me,” asked the Doctor ; “ for I have three visits of consequence to make this morning in my rounds : the first to Lady Qualmby, the second to Mrs. Everille, and the third to Justice Surfright, who is not expected to live : so be quick and let me know.”

“ ’Tis a great officer’s child and a grand lady’s, who brought the nurse and their infant to my house three weeks ago. He belongs to the Hussars here, and his servant calls him Lord Henry, I think.”

“ What !” cried the doctor, “ Lord Henry Augustus Whitaker. Bless me ! I’ll be with you instantly. I know him well ; but I did know his Lordship was married.”

“ Nor do I, Sir,” returned Shuttleworth ; “ but I swear, Sir, he and his servant came on horseback along with the coach that brought his lady, nurse, and child, and an old woman to our house ; and he ordered me and my dame to behave very civil and respectful ; and so I came hot a-foot for you, doctor, lest any thing should happen to their little one, who has the hooping cough ?”

“ How old is it, my good man ?” asked the Doctor.



“ About three or four months I think, or not so much ; but make haste, Sir.”

“ Never fear,” cried the Doctor : “ such a patient must be attended to,” and the Doctor descended in less than five minutes, and they set out together.

This sagacious member of the faculty, as soon as he beheld the infant, whose little cap and frock were of the finest fabric ; and judging from the smart appearance of the nurse, who was really a comely, good-looking young woman, that the intelligence he had received was strongly symptomatic of a profitable patient, shook his head, and declared the child in imminent danger ; that it was very lucky he had been called in, as he was particularly successful in the maladies incident to children ; but as the baby seemed delicate, and the cough and fever severe, time and attention could alone restore it. “ I would recommend you, nurse, to apprize the parents of its state of health.”

“ I expects my young lady, Sir, every day,” said Margaret ; “ but the old woman comes twice a week to see it.”

“ Does his Lordship ever call ?” asked the Doctor.

“ Lordship ! Oh aye, I knows now

whom you mean," said the nurse; "but since you knows all about it, you may guess it is kept quite close; for neither have been here, since I've lived in this place, now near a month; but the officer, if you mean him, he seemed very fond of it, and is very generous to me, and has slipped more than one guinea into my hand; and all, I suppose upon the bairn's account."

"Doubtless, doubtless," returned the Doctor. "Very generous, you say? I shall pay every attention, you may depend on't; give the infant a pap-spoonful of the mixture I shall bring, in the course of two hours; let it be repeated, shaking the bottle every third hour till it operate; and then I shall see further. You expect your lady, you say?"

"Yes, Sir; old Ann said she would come to-day. I would have taken the bairn to her, but she has changed her lodgings; and I doesn't know where she now lives."

"Very strange," cried the Doctor; "but there may be *private* reasons, nurse, you know."

"Nay," returned Margaret, "I knows no more about it, nor if I did, I munnot tell; 'tis nothing to me, so I gets paid."

But there's no fear o'that, I thinks ; no want of money howsomdever."

" Oh, no ; certainly," said the Doctor ; " it is nothing to you or me, so, as you say, we get paid ; and as you say his Lordship is so very generous, and there is no want of money, we must do all in our power to help the recovery of the child. So, I'll call again in a couple of hours."

Away went the Doctor, highly delighted he had acquired so snug a patient.

It was, however, on the second day of the Doctor's attendance, that Mary had made up her mind to take a morning's walk to E——, and see how her little *protegé* was. She accordingly muffled herself up, drew her veil over her face, and set out briskly on foot. She thought herself pretty secure from being known, and as the streets were generally full of bustle, hoped to pass unobserved. Turning the corner of the high street, however, where a crowd was gathered, as a carriage had broke down, the tail of her black silk gown unavoidably got entangled in a gentleman's spur, who turning round to make an apology and extricate the lady, proved, to her no small vexation,

to be no other than Lord Henry Augustus, out of his regimentals !

“ I am exceedingly distressed, Madam,” cried he, “ that I should be so very unfortunate.”

“ Pray don’t mention it, Sir,” returned Mary in a low voice, fearful of being known. The more his Lordship endeavoured to clear his spur, the more it was involved, and her gown was rent considerably before it was cleared.

“ Upon my honour, Madam, I insist on making reparation for this accident ; for see !” and he no doubt purposely tore the gown from his spur, “ it will be quite impossible to appear in it any more. I can by no means permit a lady to suffer so severe a loss through my fault.”

“ ’Tis accident, nothing more,” answered Mary briefly, and disguising her voice. “ Say no more, Sir ; my mistress is expecting me.”

“ *Mistress !*” cried Lord Henry, “ impossible ! your appearance bespeaks *you* the mistress, though you carry a work-basket. What shop do you live at ? I shall deal with you.”

Mary, quite out of patience at being thus detained, replied, "I keep no shop; don't detain me, Sir:" and away she tripped it, happy, as she thought, to escape.

Whether it was her *figure*, her *manner* of *walking*, or her *voice*, the soft melody of which could not, with all her efforts to conceal it, be sufficiently disguised; or whether, ever on the watch for novelty, this noble and gallant officer sought a solace for the disappointment he met from our Heroine; certain it is, something attracted him, and he was determined to follow her at a distance: he really had no idea it was Miss Irwin whom he had so suddenly encountered; for contrary to her general custom, she had no appearance of mourning: an old fashioned straw bonnet, with a very thick white veil, a scarlet mantle, black silk gown, white stockings, and low *pattens*; a thing she never before used; but the streets and roads were miry, after a thaw: thus metamorphosed, she hugged herself in escaping notice, and doubly so, in Lord Henry's not recollecting her.

Not so *he*. Attracted by something in her appearance above the common, notwithstanding her present concealment, he

still followed her. She kept walking very fast, and as she was now clear of the town, and the sun struck out uncommonly warm, observing few passengers along, but those country persons wholly intent on their own pursuits, she ventured to throw back her veil, to breathe a somewhat purer atmosphere.

This did not pass unnoticed by his Lordship, who, now as he thought the coast was clear, had a fuller opportunity to speak, and make compensation to her for the mischief he had occasioned, hoping at the same time it might lead to something more particular; he therefore doubled his steps, and at length was by her side.

“ You must pardon me, Madam,” said his Lordship; “ but I shall not rest satisfied, unless I make an adequate compensation for the involuntary mischief I have unfortunately occasioned; and I most earnestly request, nay insist—Good Heaven! is it possible! Miss Irwin! do I behold Miss Irwin! my dearest girl; and was it *you*, I just now so cruelly injured?”

“ Leave me, my Lord,” cried Mary in an agony. “ Oh, cease to follow, to persecute an unhappy creature, already weigh-

ed down by constructive circumstances, thus confirmed, alas ! by your cruel perseverance. Oh that *coach* ! that *coach* ! has sealed my disgrace, irreparably, in the eyes of a misjudging and censorious world. You likewise, my Lord, are implicated ; and oh, for pity, for *mercy's* sake ! clear me ; vindicate me."

" Would I could," cried his Lordship. " For myself, I am perfectly ready to renounce you, and vindicate any suspicions that attach to you concerning *me* ; but that *child* ; before I met you here ; that child, I own, has raised my apprehensions, and, doubtless, caused general and unfavourable impressions."

" 'That *child*, that unfortunate child !' exclaimed Mary, " has proved my *curse*, my *bane* ! But here, where no eye witnesses, save yours, and the all-seeing, penetrating glance of Heaven, which searches all hearts, I most solemnly aver, that child is *not mine* ; it is indeed my *sister's* ; bequeathed to me on her *death-bed* ; and deserted by his unnatural father ! In an evil hour, and contrary to my friends' advice, I took it with me ; but I am punished now ! Oh ! then, my Lord, if any spark of ho-

nour or humanity dwell in your bosom, cease to follow and torture."

"Enough, Miss Irwin," replied Lord Henry, gravely. "*Libertine* as I am, I will not, cannot doubt this solemn appeal. I myself have been deceived by appearances. I really thought, Sir George Dashington, pardon me, for the present, had added more than *one* victim to his licentious list. But, I am not like *him*, a *systematic, deliberate* seducer; and I assure you, I scorn to persist, when I find my suit disagreeable and unavailing. From this day I shall withhold and withdraw myself from your notice; but only on this condition, that I repair the injury I have done your gown, by an adequate return, and by publicly defending your character, should it ever be called in question."

"*Neither*, my Lord; *neither* can I, circumstanced as I am, by any means admit of: as to the first, it is not worth mentioning; and for the latter, the greatest favour, the only one, you now can ever confer on me, is to drop all knowledge or mention of my name."

"Hard, hard restriction!" cried his Lordship, "but I obey." Just as he took



her hand at parting Mr. Day passed them in his gig ; he raised his glass for a moment, and then drove on. Mary was now ready to drop. Lord Henry attributed her fresh embarrassment to himself, and immediately left her.

She now with a heavy heart, proceeded to the weaver's ; lost in perplexing and bewildered thought, she had passed the cottage door, and was obliged to make enquiry. She retraced her steps, and gained the house. Shuttleworth and his wife received her most obsequiously, but she scarcely noticed them, and went forward to enquire about the child. The nurse was pacing the room with it in her arms, it had just fallen into a slumber, and Mary sat down, and received the sleeping infant on her lap ; for Margaret had declared she was quite exhausted, having passed a sleepless night, the poor babe being so ill and restless, and never out of her arms. Mary saw it was considerably altered for the worse, and she began to be apprehensive for its life. " Poor babe !" she exclaimed, " happy had it been, if thou hadst never seen the light. Unconscious innocent ! thou hast involved thy only mother now, in sad disgrace and

perplexity, past cure, I fear!" and the tears involuntarily dropped from her speaking eyes upon its little face.

Margaret saw all this, and heard what she had uttered; but took no notice, only said, "the doctor will be shortly here, and give his opinion; that he appeared a very nice man, very skilful and very attentive, and there was no doubt he would do all in his power for its recovery."

Mary made no answer; her thoughts were deeply engrossed; which the nurse perceiving, went on:—

"Indeed, Mistress, you are wrong to take on so; you couldn't grieve more for it, not if it were your *own*. I'm sure, if in case I was you, I should wish the dear child in Heaven, out of a sinful world, nothing but *trouble*, I thinks: but you knows best."

"Margaret," answered her mistress, "you will be amply paid for *your* trouble; *my* trouble is from another source; a *private* one, of which you are no judge, nor have a right to enquire."

"I know, Mistress: but I wish people wouldn't be axing me about such things, as don't consarn them."

"*Who* ask you?" questioned Mary,

“ Why, Miss ; the Doctor that comes here ; he supposes it a great person’s child, so I never contradicts him, thinking as how he’ll pay it more respect and attendance ; he’s a mighty man for visiting great folk, so he says.”

During this conversation, the Doctor made his appearance. Mary was leaning her head over the infant, and endeavouring to hush it, as it now began to awake, when the Doctor approached. I beg your *Ladyship’s* pardon, but your little boy is considerably better since yesterday, I perceive ;” Mary raised her head. “ Eh ! what ! why ! is it Miss Irwin I behold ? I was given to understand that, that——”

“ I believe, Sir, your business calls you to attend to the *infant* only.”

“ Certainly, certainly, Madam,” returned the loquacious gentleman ; “ but really it surprises me to find *you* here ; a very strong symptom of friendship and affection ; you are acquainted with its mother, I presume ?”

“ I *was*, but she is *dead*. This child is my *nephew*, Sir, bequeathed to my care, and in that sense, I may be considered as

its *parent*, for I promised my dying sister to be a *mother* to it."

"How good! how generous! how exemplary!" answered the Doctor; "but surely the father—— my Lord, I think, ought——"

"My Lord!" said Mary in surprise. "I do not understand you, Sir."

"Very likely, Miss,—hem!" returned the Doctor. "I was thinking of a patient I have this moment left visiting, poor Lady Qualmsby! She and the child are as well as can be expected. My Lord was all anxiety, 'till it was over. 'Doctor,' said his Lordship to me, 'you are a very clever fellow, and I'll recommend you to all my acquaintance, but you must keep this a profound *secret*. For you must know, Miss Irwin, they were *privately* married not long since, as *you* may be, or any other lady; and for particular reasons it is not publicly announced as yet."

"But the *child*, Doctor," asked Mary, with impatience: "what think you, what is your opinion? do you think there is any danger?"

"No immediate; but it is not absolutely out of danger, I must say. Yet if the cough

does not increase, and the fever should abate, as there is every seeming probability, in a day or two, I shall be able to pronounce with more certainty: meanwhile, nurse, follow up the mixture, as ordered; but I declare, Miss Irwin, it surprised me to find you here, heh, heh, heh! I did not expect to have the honour to attend so near and dear a relative of yours. I sat in a box the other night, next to Lady Wrighton, and was highly delighted with your performance; so was her Ladyship, though she hinted to me some flying reports, the lie of the day; but I contradicted them flat; and I shall have the happiness to do so from the best authority; your nephew, hem!"

"I beg of all things, good Sir, not to mention my name in any respect, nor your having seen me on any account. You don't know the consequence."

"Enough, Miss Irwin; quite close, be assured, Madam," replied the Doctor. "I can take a hint: good morning. I shall call twice every day, by all that's punctual." As he rose to depart, the door opened, and Lord Henry Augustus entered with a large parcel made up in paper under his arm! He started back on seeing the Doctor, and

would have instantly retired ; but the Doctor knew him, and accosted him, “ Ah, my Lord ! who thought of meeting *you* here ; but odso ! why should I wonder, *hem* ! ”

Lord Henry bowed distantly to Mary, and said, “ I beg pardon, Madam ; but I believe I have mistaken the house.” He, however, put down the parcel, and taking the Doctor’s arm, “ A word with you, Sir,” and both then instantly quitted the cottage ; leaving Mary more dead than alive, so totally overwhelmed, that she sat in silent agony, till a violent hysteric fit seized her ; which called the attention of Margaret and the good woman of the house to her immediate assistance. She continued ill the whole day ; and in the evening the weaver found it necessary to call a coach to convey her back to her lodgings. The parcel being directed for her was placed in the coach, but she did not perceive it, till the coachman delivered it to old Ann at the door.

The old woman was quite alarmed at her mistress staying out the whole day, a circumstance that had not occurred before ; and her fears were increased, when she beheld Mary helped out of the coach, by Shuttle-

worth, who came with her, and the coachman. Her looks were pale, her eyes appeared inflamed, and her whole countenance in visible agitation. She complained of a great pain and throbbing at her temples, and a violent palpitation of the heart. Mrs. Dunn ran immediately to make some wine whey for her ; her bed was warmed ; and she was very carefully put therein.

Ann sat up with her mistress the best part of the night : towards morning she fell into a slumber, and the old woman threw herself in her clothes on her little bed in the closet, ready to jump up again, should her dear young lady awake and call her.

Mary, who was always an early riser, whether business, or over-night's fatigue had detained her late or not, now found herself too weak to rise at her usual hour : her head was not so painful, but the palpitation at her heart still remained unabated. It being Sunday, she confined herself to her chamber all the day, in the hope of being able to attend rehearsal on Monday, and perform that night. But she found next morning, that she was really too ill to leave her apartments, and accordingly penned a polite apology, stating her real indisposition,

which she sent to the house by Ann to deliver to the acting manager.

When Mr. Barlow opened it. "Umph!" cried he: "so your mistress is ill; and can't play to-night; but 'tis no wonder: if ladies will so far forget themselves, and meet officers in disguise at a distance, and stay out with them *gallavanti*ng, they must take the consequence; but our theatre and the public are not to be trifled with, and so you may tell her; there is a great house expected, and I don't think we can change the piece, so she must come."

"Lack-a-day! 'twill be mortally impossible, Sir," replied Ann. "My poor Mistress is scarce able to totter across her room for the matter o'that; and as for gallavantiing with officers, 'tis no such a thing; and you are a false man to say so of my sweet young lady: she would not be seen speaking to them for the world."

"I say, old woman, 'tis *fact*; and you are as bad as she, if you deny it. Mr. Day passed them on Saturday morning long before ten on the road: it surprised and vexed him much. Not be *seen*! no, I believe you; she did not wish it, or they would not meet, both in *disguise*, as they did; but



those things are too glaring with all their caution, to pass unnoticed ; but she'll hear from Mr. Day about it, and I would advise her to perform to-night at all events, and not set people's tongues a-going, more than they are already : 'tis very *shameful*, I must say, and so you may tell her."

Mr. Barlow turned his back on the old woman, who, unable to reply, hobbled home as fast as she could. When she entered, " Marcy be good to me !" exclaimed Ann, " that is, for sartin, the greatest bear in the varsal world ; he'll take no excuse tho'f I tould him 'twas mortally impossible for you to go on."

" No matter, Ann ; I will endeavour : nothing shall prevent me, they will think it an-excuse, and I will venture, if I am laid up for a month."

" Then I would see them at Jericho first, with a murrain to them, and their plays," said Ann. " What are they all to your precious health ? Isn't one play as good as another ? aye, by my truly, for they are all made up of lies."

Her mistress, against all the remonstrances of her old servant, who brought up Mrs. Dunn, to join her entreaties, to dissuade

her from appearing that night, determined to persevere in her intentions: in this she was strengthened on the receipt of a letter, which Mr. Day left now at her door, on his return from the rehearsal: it was couched in the following terms:

“ Madam,

“ From the conversations I have held with you relative to the apparent imprudence and inconsistency of your conduct, and notwithstanding the admonitory counsels I have given, and the promises you gave me in consequence, it has grieved me much, to behold that advice slighted, by a behaviour that returns *contempt* for admonition, and seems to set the opinion of the public at defiance. You, certainly, Miss Irwin, ought to be the best judge of your own actions; and I should no longer trouble myself about you, or your *private* concerns, were you not, as a public character, answerable to that *public*, whose good or ill-opinion stamps each individual, and necessarily involves the reputation of the theatre.

“ Far be it from me, Madam, to judge the *motives* which actuate your conduct, or to form an opinion of you, by seeking to know your character, *anterior* to your

joining my establishment. From the very favourable, and indeed most flattering report, the Viscountess Armsfield had been induced to send me, from what cause I know not, but from an amiable credulity and weakness, as supposing eminent talents were combined with eminent propriety ; I have now to lament, that her ladyship has been thus deceived, and even I myself might have still remained in the same error, had not recent and *ocular* demonstration placed fluctuating rumour and opinion beyond a doubt, or possibility of mistake.

“ I therefore, for the *last* time, conjure you to reflect most seriously on your *imprudence*, to call it by no harsher name, and forego your present injurious connexion, ere it be too late ; and I am reluctantly compelled to inform the Viscountess of my reasons, in self-justification, for cancelling the articles of engagement between us ; which nothing could induce me to do, but a deference to the world’s opinion ; and a due respect for the reputation of my theatre.

“ You must pardon me, Miss Irwin, for being thus *explicit*. *Candour* is indispensable on the present occasion, and though I

sincerely trust your prudence and circumspection may be doubled, you will, I fear, find it hard to overcome those reports already circulated, and too evidently confirmed by a fatal obstinacy against maturer counsel; as I am sorry to predict, your benefit in this town, will be a lamentable proof: in the hope, however, I may for once be mistaken in my judgment, and the world receive a more favourable impression,

“ I am, Madam,

“ Your most humble servant;

“ THOMAS DAY.”

“ Yes!” exclaimed Mary with a deep-fetched sigh, which seemed to rend her bosom, “ I am most truly unfortunate! a cruel chain and combination of circumstances has wound itself around me, from which no hand but the *Omnipotent's* now can free me! On *him*, therefore, will I still rely. My disobedience he has punished, perhaps not sufficiently as yet; probably the storm is only gathering, and will fall more heavily on my devoted head. Be it so. I will bear it patiently, endure its fury, and thank the chastening rod which thus inflicts the punishment I have deserved. Grant me but fortitude to

sustain its keenest force, and all-pitying Heaven may in its mercy pardon and restore me !”

These reflections, inaudibly poured forth, but not less fervently, calmed the palpitation of her heart ; for she now, she supposed, knew the worst that could befall her : she found a heavy weight raised from her oppressed heart, and she breathed more freely.

“ Yes, Ann, I feel myself much better, and I will venture to appear. Should I absent myself, they will attribute it to fear, or shame, a consciousness of guilt to which I am a stranger. My body’s health I fear not ; it is strong ; I am young, and naturally full of spirits ; but they have flagged of late. I have been teased, tormented, cruelly persecuted and traduced ! That, that, alone affects me ; but I will not, must not sink under it, nor give my enemies, nor a censorious world further room to triumph. *No*, Ann, my good old woman, I will go ; and Mr. Dunn will, I know, be so good as to order a sedan chair to take me, as I fear the jolting of a carriage may affect my head.”

“ Well, well,” cried Ann ; “ it comforts me to see you better ; for your poor eyes

look clearer ; but I believe that great bear of a man did not care if you dropped dead on the spot ; so his wicked lying stage-plays did not suffer by it. Marry be gracious to me ! what sinful ways have folks of getting money : why 'tis but t'other day Mr. Dunn tould me, they are so mad for shows and plays, that a laundress went in debt to her tallow chandler for a stone of soap and six pound of candles, which she sold again for half nothing to take her and two more to the two-shilling gallery ! Lord be marcifful to us ! Talk of raising the *wind*, marry whip me ! but this is raising the *devil*, I thinks, for I am sure no good can come on't."

Down went Ann to speak to Mr. Dunn, to procure a sedan for her Mistress. " Faith, and I'll do that thing," replied the good natured landlord, " with all the veins of my heart. I'll speak to Felix M'Carthy, my own countryman, to bring his sedan : he's a strapping fellow, and he'll clap on his straps and buckles, and he and his partner will dance your young Mistress between them to the theatre in no time, and I'll trot before them myself with a lantern."

The pieces for the evening, were " *The*

*Stranger*," an interlude of dancing, and the new whimsical after-piece of "*Frightened to Death*."

Though Mary had often performed the part of *Mrs. Haller*, and it did not require any forcible exertion of her powers compared to many others ; yet, in her present low state, it was a sufficiently arduous undertaking, particularly as she never spared, nor could restrain her feelings, when once she entered into the spirit of her author ; which was ever her aim and practice. She was therefore ready betimes to compose herself, and summon her energies for the occasion.

When she descended to the green-room the languor in her eyes, and through her frame, evidently betrayed her indisposition, and Mr. Day had the kindness to observe, " if he had supposed her so *seriously* ill, the play should have been changed ;" to which she replied, " she had never *yet feigned illness*, nor ever would."

The house was crowded, particularly the boxes, and on her entrance, contrary to her expectation, she was greeted with a round of applause : this made her forget her indisposition, and called forth additional exertion to combat it ; the struggle against nature

was, however, too powerful; and at the conclusion of the second act, when the Stranger starts at beholding his wife at Count Winterson's, and suddenly rushes out, when she falls into the Baron's arms, she was so totally overcome by her feelings, that she literally fainted away !

The house resounded with applause, but after a long pause they grew impatient, when Mr. Atall came forward and apologized for the sudden and serious illness of Miss Irwin, who was unable to proceed, and hoped they would permit Miss Dashwold to go on in her stead, and indulge her with the book.

“ No, no,” cried the audience; “ proceed with the interlude and farce. We are sorry for Miss Irwin's illness, but can admit of no substitute.”

Miss Dashwold was highly pleased, for she was “ *frightened to death*” at the attempt. Mary was conveyed home.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

THE Doctor before mentioned, ever anxious to see and to be seen, was a great frequenter of the theatre, as in case of an overflow, or accident, he was ready at hand, should medical aid be required. He sat in one of the front-boxes, when Mary fainted, and it was no sooner confirmed, than up he jumped immediately, saying, "Very sorry, very sorry; but particularly happy I am here, for I attend a young infant of her's in the hooping-cough, and I'll step behind, breathe a vein, and give necessary directions, and return as soon as possible." The inadvertent expressions he in his hurry let fall, did not escape observation; they were instantly handed round the whole lower tier of boxes, and various were the comments made thereon.

This officious member of the faculty, when he reached the green-room, beheld the insensible Mary on a couch, her head supported by old Ann; Mrs. Downing bathing her

temples, and Mr. Lilac and Mr. Day applying their smelling-bottles to recover her. He quickly removed her lace-sleeve, bound her arm, and applied his lancet. He praised the form of her arm, the azure vein from which the pure stream issued ; and declared he never drew finer blood in his whole extensive practice. Having performed the operation successfully, he spoke to her, and she began to open her eyes, looked wildly about, then closed them again with a deep sigh. The Doctor now ordered a coach to be called. Mr. Day, to say the truth, appeared much concerned, when he contemplated that fair form and beauteous countenance, recently so full of animation and intelligence, now extended, pale, and insensible. He repented of the severe tendency of his letter, which, he rightly conjectured, contributed to increase her malady, and caused this sudden and distressing event ; and he now blamed himself for crediting the evidence of his own eyes, to the prejudice of one he had ever been inclined to think of so favourably. “ Poor girl ! ” thought the proprietor ; “ should she, after all, be *innocent*, and be wrongfully accused, I shall not readily forgive myself for being accessory to her illness ; if otherwise,

sure never was deportment more imposing, or a countenance so deceptive !”

The coach being arrived, Mary was raised, with the assistance of the Doctor and Mr. Day, and gently placed therein, and, as we have before mentioned, was carefully conveyed home, accompanied by her old attendant and the obsequious surgeon. Mr. Dunn was at the door with his wife ; both were quite alarmed ; and the husband immediately lifted her out of the carriage, and carried her up stairs, in his strong arms, to her chamber. The Doctor ordered her to be put to bed directly, and kept quiet : he would make up a composing draught, and wait upon his patient early next morning.

The disciple of Galen was punctual in his attendance on Mary, for above three weeks, till her disorder took a favourable turn, which was a nervous affection, and a spasmodic fever on the spirits. It was a full month before he could pronounce her out of danger, as he dreaded a relapse. In this opinion he was confirmed by a regular physician, whom he had called in, and who approved of his treatment of the patient. The country air was advised, as soon as she was able to be removed. Mary frequently enquired about

her little nephew, and the Doctor assured her, the child was recovering fast, and almost quite well. This eased her mind, but she lamented her extreme weakness, which disqualified her from her professional pursuits, but which she was compelled to relinquish, till her health was thoroughly renovated. Mr. Day, to do him justice, sent regularly to enquire how she was, as did Mr. and Mrs. Chronic and Mr. Lilac. Even Mr. Barlow called three or four times, and Mrs. Downing as soon as Mary was able to sit up, came often, and chatted an hour with her, and by her good humour and jocose eccentricity, helped to cheer the spirits of the poor invalid. Nay, so highly were her talents respected, that notwithstanding the prejudicial reports that had gone abroad, they were only in part credited ; for several of the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood personally called, and sent their servants to make their compliments and enquiries.

This attention not a little contributed to her recovery. Mr. Day, when she was able to be removed, procured her a neat country lodging at a farm-house, about seven miles distant, free from the gross air and smoky

atmosphere of so populous and large a manufacturing town ; where we shall at present leave her.

During this interval, two gentlemen, with their servants, arrived in a travelling post-chaise, which put up at the very inn our Heroine stopped at on her first coming to the town. They were both tall, handsome men, of commanding aspect and elegant deportment. The one was dressed in deep mourning, the other in blue. From the cockades in their servants' hats, they were supposed to be military gentlemen, which was confirmed by their men asking for their masters' chambers, in order to deposit the *Colonel's* and the *Major's* trunks in their respective and appropriate apartments.

It was about six in the evening when they arrived ; they seemed much fatigued, and ordered dinner to be got ready immediately. Their servants said they had travelled post from Bath, and had very lately returned from the army on the borders of France. Every attention was instantly paid to these respectable guests ; they were shewn up stairs to an elegant dining apartment, and their two chambers were adjacent. " The length of their stay was uncertain,"

they said; "but in all probability it might be a few weeks."

As these gentlemen, for their own private reasons, travelled *incog*. they had previously cautioned their servants not to mention their names; their rank they were not so solicitous about; and their trunks had no more than their respective initials affixed in brass nails. When they had partaken of an excellent dinner, and their wine placed on the table, the waiter entered, and delivered the papers of the day, and the night's play-bills.

The Colonel took up a bill, the Major a newspaper. The former having run over the characters, said to his companion, "I don't see, Major, the name of Irwin in this bill. I hope my intelligence is not false; but if so, we have come a forced march to very little purpose."

"Pho! pho! Colonel," returned the other: "she either don't perform to-night, or the sly baggage, for prudential reasons, as she knows it would seriously offend me to see her name in print, has changed it for *another*; a very common thing among players, I have heard."

"I can't think that," answered the Colonel; "she went by her *own* name, when I

had the happiness of seeing her; and as I am conscious she can never *disgrace* it by her conduct, why should she assume another?"

"We must enquire about it," said the Major. "Ring the bell."

The waiter entered. "Did you ring, gentlemen!"

"So, there is a play to-night in this town!" said the Colonel. "Is it worth seeing? Are the performers passable?"

"Very clever, I hear, Sir; but I'm no judge. But there is a Mr. Strainge, who is highly spoken of as a great actor; and a young lady, whom all the whole town is talking about."

"Indeed! is she so attractive?" asked the Major.

"Oh, Sir, she is the greatest beauty I ever see'd. She put up here for two days on her first coming. I see'd her often. She brought an old woman with her, and a nurse, and child."

"'Pshaw!" cried the Colonel to the Major; "it can't be her. What is her name?"

"Irwin, please your honour."

"Irwin! You mistake, man, it can't be. *Nurse and child!*" said the Major. "It can't be, Sir."

“*Yes,*” said the man, “but it certainly is, your honour. Her name has been often in our bills ; but she has not performed these five weeks ; she has been very ill, and they say ——”

“*Who* says, Sir ? *what* do they say, Sir ?” asked the Colonel, hastily.

“I don’t know, Sir ; but they say, ’tis all along of some report about her and an officer of the Horse here ; but I don’t know the rights on’t ; but ’tis a thousand pities if ’tis true, for she’s the sweetest girl and the best actress we ever had in this town ; she beats your Londoners all to nothing. But my mistress can inform your honours.”

“Did you think, fellow, this Miss Irwin, this girl is come-at-able, eh ?” asked the Major.

“I can’t say, indeed, your honour,” said the waiter, smiling ; “but people will talk.”

“Leave us, and send your mistress, Sirrah,” said the Major. “Damn the stage and the town ! You see the consequences, Colonel ; the cursed profession has branded her reputation already.”

“Hush ! hush ! my dear Edward, it cannot be her ; ’tis some mistake ; another person of the same name, most certainly. *Nurse and child ! impossible ! ridiculous !*”



“ So I should think ; but let us be calm, Colonel, and not betray ourselves before the hostess. We must appear quite indifferent.”

“ Do *you* command *your* temper, Major ? you may rely on *me*, for I believe the whole account *erroneous*.”

Mrs. Bustler, the mistress of the inn, now knocked at the door for admittance. “ What are your commands with me, gentlemen ? I hope the dinner was to your liking, though had you sent notice but an hour before, I should have prepared something better for your reception.”

“ The goodness of your dinner and other accommodations are not to be questioned,” the Colonel replied ; “ but your port has a different flavour to that I have drank in Portugal ; it seems a different article, wholly.”

“ It is the best I can procure, Sir, I assure you,” returned Mrs. Bustler. “ I pay ready money for it, and I warrant it genuine, as it is imported. There is no inn, nor any wine merchant in the town can produce *better*, for we import our *own*, believe me.”

“ I believe it to be as genuine as *England* produces,” returned the Colonel ; “ but the *flavour* is totally different in its *native* soil,

though there are different qualities there, as to strength and richness; but scarcely a single pipe of port reaches the *British Isles unadulterated*. They doctor it, *before* they ship it off: this I know to be a fact, almost without exception; but that is *nothing* compared to the tricks played with it, when it is housed by merchants *here*. Believe me, Madam, when I assure you as a solemn truth, that the whole kingdom of *Portugal* does not grow as *much* as is consumed annually in the *British* dominions alone: how then are the rest of Europe and foreign parts to be supplied? Have you any good Cape wine!"

"As good, Sir, as ——"

"As your neighbours, no doubt," said the Colonel. "We will taste a bottle; touch the bell for the waiter. You will please to be seated, Madam. We are entire strangers in this town, and wish you to give us a little information. How does the trade in this extensive district flourish?"

"Quite at a stand, Sir; nothing doing; every thing quite dead, Sir. More bankrupts now since the peace, than in the height of the war. Is not that surprising, gentlemen? We thought when peace came, *trade* would

revive, and the taxes would be taken off; but we don't know how it is, for they still continue, and foreign markets are shut, or undersell us."

"The natural consequences of a long and arduous warfare, maintained wholly at the expence of England for its *existence* as a *nation*. We have triumphed at length, it is true; but the cause being chiefly ours, England was compelled to borrow from herself; she is both *creditor* and *debtor* to herself, the national *faith* is pledged, and she must be *just*. Our character stands high for *integrity*: if we are *generous* to others, we should at least be *just* to *ourselves*, and as taxation can alone liquidate it, such must *perforce* continue for a time."

"True, gentlemen," said the landlord's wife; "but poor people don't think so deeply; and can't rest satisfied when they are more than half starving. I believe, we must sew up our mouths every way, for we mustn't even *complain* now, it seems."

"Complaints, Madam, are of little or no use, and only make bad worse, when no efficient remedy can be applied. *National distress* is like the *gout*, very painful and *irritating* for the time; and patience, I be-

lieve, the only cure ; but amid all this distress, it seems, *balls, concerts, and plays* are encouraged still."

" People, Sir," said Mrs. Bustler, " are glad to fly to any place of amusement to divert the melancholy gloom that hangs over them at home ; and that is the reason, I fancy, they are so encouraged ; but nothing like to what they have been, though we have the best set of players now with us that we have had for many seasons past."

" Indeed ! where is your theatre ? Is it large ?" asked the Major.

" It is very large and handsome, as most in the kingdom, I am told, Sir. It is not many streets off ; but we have had a great loss in our best actress lately."

" How is that ?" asked the Colonel.

" She was seized ill on the stage, Sir, one night, has had a fever, and is now in the country, for her health ; but they say, she will soon be able to perform again, and she really is a charming creature, I must say."

" A little *gay*, perhaps ? eh ! Mrs. Bustler, as many of those ladies are, I fancy."

" I don't know, Sir : the ladies belonging to our theatre all bear a very good character ; but this young lady is a stranger, and only

joined at Christmas. She is remarkably handsome, and people will wonder to see a single young lady bring a nurse and young child along with her, though she told me in confidence, it is her *nephew*, the orphan child of her sister, who is dead. So, I recommended her to a friend of mine, as a lodger ; but I don't know how it was, Mrs. Larkins came to me, a few weeks afterwards, and rated me roundly for recommending such a person to her house : to be sure, I knew nothing more of her, than to appearance she seemed to be the most modest young lady I ever beheld, and quite the gentlewoman ; but there is no knowing folks now-a-days."

" She may be privately married, perhaps," said the Colonel, "and wishes to keep it *secret*."

" I fancy not, Sir, or she would not carry the child with her ; besides, she should not be seen *coaching* it with officers in the open day ; it don't look *pretty, married* or *single* ; it only makes people talk. But that is her own concern ; but 'tis a great pity, be it as it may, for there is no speaking against her *acting* on the *stage* : *there* she shines."

" Perhaps Irwin is not her real name ?" said the Major.

“ Perhaps not, Sir ; but there is no saying : there has been talk enough about her, however.”

“ More talk than she *deserves*, I doubt,” replied the Major, warmly.

“ She is a lone and unprotected female, and very handsome, it seems,” said the Colonel, “and the ungenerous world will censure such.”

“ She should be more *prudent* then, and more *cautious*, and not give the world the opportunity or room for such censure, Sir,” said Mrs. Bustler.

“ Well, Mrs. Bustler, when is your next assembly, or concert ? Take a glass of your own Cape, Madam ; I think it excellent.”

“ We shall have a concert on Saturday, gentlemen, and our fourth subscription assembly will be on the Wednesday following ; but you will excuse me, gentlemen, I shall be wanting. You are come, perhaps, recruiting to these parts ?”

“ We are not as yet determined,” answered the Major. “ Business of consequence has brought us down here, and from the complexion of things, it is likely to prove vexatious.”

Mrs. Bustler, with a curtsey, left the gentlemen together.

The two friends drank their wine in silence, both their minds fully occupied with the account they had just heard. The Colonel concealed his concern as much as possible from his companion, whose honour and pride seemed wounded in the tenderest point, the reputation of an only surviving and beloved sister. His passions, at all times ardent, were inflamed almost to madness at the thought; while the sensations of the other, partook more of grief than rage, yet were not the less acute.

“ If,” sighed the Colonel, “ Mary Irwin has fallen ! adieu to all that is amiable in woman ! *Purity* is no longer extant upon earth, and *virtue* but an empty name ; but I will not, cannot, harbour the thought.”

“ Why not, Colonel ? ” replied the Major, shortly. “ What is there in the name of Irwin to exempt it from a blot in its escutcheon, more than in that of *Emerson* ? Has not my sister wilfully disgraced herself, by plunging into a profession, the most repugnant of all others to female *delicacy* ? Has she not sinned with her eyes open ? *Your* sister was cruelly *deceived*. *Mine* cannot have

the same excuse. I have no patience with Mrs. Forester nor Mr. Percy, to encourage her in so disgraceful a pursuit ; but they were blinded by her artful persuasions, which she took advantage of, to follow the bent of her vicious inclinations."

" Blame not the profession," returned the Colonel. " Was not my sister as virtuously educated as *yours*, under the vigilant eye of a strict father, and an attentive brother ; yet she turned to folly, even before our *faces* ; but their dispositions were widely different. My unhappy sister was fond of admiration from a child. Miss Irwin *shunned* it. Think you, she could have won my heart, if her conduct had not been rectitude itself ? *Never* ; and I will still believe, she is cruelly aspersed."

" Colonel Emerson, I have really no patience to see you continue such a dupe. What can be a greater proof of her fondness for *admiration*, than *nightly* to expose her person to the rude gaze of every libertine and ruffian, on a public *stage* ! It is *monstrous* ! and serves only as a cloak to other enormities. Different *dispositions*, indeed ! It only proves to me, that *mine* is by far the greater *hypocrite* ; but let us henceforth re-



nounce the deceitful sex. Brothers we are in affliction and disgrace ! Be our *swords* in future our only mistress ; they cannot inflict a deeper wound, nor lacerate our hearts more than these shameless sisters of ours have done ; but I'll find her out, and wring her soul with my upbraidings. No, I renounce her from this moment, and never more behold her."

"We are equally unfortunate, my dear Major ; but I have *reflected*, and it is our duty to *reclaim* if possible, and not *abandon* them ; now pray, be more composed. Something whispers me, your sister is wronged, and till we have fuller proof, great as are my fears, I will suspend my judgment. Come, let us wander forth, and forego these torturing suspicions. Suppose we drop into the theatre ; we may chance to hear some intelligence there."

"Any where," cried the Major, starting up ; "for I am nearly distracted." The two friends then sallied forth to kill the remainder of the evening.

They were both muffled up in their travelling great coats, it being a cold night : as they proceeded, they stopped at a house, where a gentleman had just knocked for

admittance, and enquired of him the way to the theatre. "As you seem strangers, gentlemen, I'll step with you, and shew you the house;" the door was opened. "I am only going, my dear, to escort these gentlemen, who are strangers and enquiring for our theatre; I shall be back presently."

"Very well, Mr. Larkins," said the wife.

"Larkins!" cried the Colonel. "I beg pardon, Sir, don't you let lodgings, Sir?"

"Yes, Sir, sometimes."

"Are they vacant?" asked the Major.

"At present they are; an old gentleman and his wife have just left us."

"Oh, we are wrong," said the Colonel.

"We thought you let lodgings to the *players*?"

"We used to do, Sir, and we have no objection still, Sir, to let them to the *gentlemen* belonging to the theatre; but we will have no more of the *ladies*; we have had trouble enough with the last."

"Aye? how came that about? I should think they give less trouble than the *men*."

"You don't belong to the profession, I think, gentlemen, by your saying so; but whether or not, if you wish to see the apartments, you are welcome."

“ With all my heart,” said the Colonel. They were accordingly shewn up stairs.

“ We are military men, only arrived this evening from Bath, with our two servants ; we shall probably be here two months ; but we shall want separate beds, and one bed for our men.”

“ I believe, gentlemen, my wife can accommodate you to your satisfaction, if you will be so good as to call to-morrow.”

“ Nay, a day or two,” replied the Colonel, “ makes no difference ; but, why are you so averse to receiving *actresses* into your house ? it is so convenient, and such a short distance for them.”

“ Why, gentlemen, to say the truth,” said Mrs. Larkins, “ ours is a regular *quiet* house, and, as my husband says, it don’t look pretty to have officers gaping and staring in at the windows, as was the case with the last ; it don’t look *handsome* ; and, as my husband says, it is apt to give our house a bad name, so we soon sent the lady about her business.”

“ Indeed ! She must have given you much provocation then ?” said the Major.

“ Provocation enough, Sir, for that matter,” said the husband.

“Nay, my dear Mr. Larkins, let *me* tell the gentlemen. You must know, this Miss Irwin, they call her, as sweet an innocent young creature as you could wish to set eyes on, brought herself here, with an old woman, she called Ann.”

“Ann!” cried the Major, “zounds! it is!”

“*Hush, hush!* be quiet,” said the Colonel. “Well, Madam, let’s hear.”

“And a wet nurse with an infant in her arms. I thought it very strange; but she told me, it was her sister’s child, who died.”

“She *lied* then,” interrupted the Major, hastily; “but proceed, Madam.”

“It looks very like it, Sir; but you shall hear. As I could not contradict it, it passed on, till the old woman, who is a sad testy body, and the young nurse, who is a talking thing too, had often high words, and at last I overheard nurse say to old Ann, she didn’t understand nursing of *b——ds*.”

“Pho, Pho!” replied the Colonel: “we are not to believe all we hear.”

“I hope, Sir,” said Mr. Larkins, “I may believe my own *eyes*; for I solemnly declare, I saw the old woman, nurse, and child, get into a carriage about nine in the

morning, and Miss Irwin herself handed in by an *officer* of Hussars, and he seated himself by her side, draw up the blinds, and all drive off together ; aye, and twenty more saw the whole proceeding, as well as myself ; consequently, I ordered my wife to give her warning ; and she is moved, I don't know where."

" Pretty plain, I think."

" As any demonstration in Euclid," said the Major. " Come, Colonel, are you satisfied ? Good night, Mr. Larkins."

" Shan't I see you to the theatre, gentlemen ?" said Larkins.

" 'Tis too late now—another time," said the Colonel : " we are fatigued, and shall return to the inn. To-morrow we shall call about the lodgings."

The two friends returned, arm in arm, but in silence, to the inn. They ate a slight supper, took their wine in silence, and retired to rest, with only a reciprocal " Good night:" so deeply and so severely did this authenticated news affect them.

They both passed a restless, sleepless night, and at breakfast next morning their looks sufficiently indicated the perturbation of their minds. To dissipate their melan-

choly thoughts they hired horses, and, accompanied by their servants, took a morning's ride into the country. They took the road to E——. As they passed through the village, and looking back for their men, they beheld the Major's servant spring from his horse, and clasp a woman and child fast in his arms. They smiled, and walked their horses slowly onwards.

In a few minutes they heard the man gallop up. "Oh, master! oh, your honour!" cried he; "I have seen my own dear Margaret! 'Tis she herself! I should have as soon expected to meet her in *France*, as in this part of the world. But I'll tell your honour all about it, when we gets back. Sure, the sky will fall, and wonders never cease!"

"Well, John, ride back to your wife, since you are so fond of her," said his master; "but you put more faith in the sex than I do. We shall return and call for you in three hours."

"Ah, Sir!" cried John, "three hours are not three minutes to a man, who hasn't seen his wife for full three quarters of a year; for 'tis just so long since I left her and our recruiting party at home, to join your honour

and our regiment abroad." And the poor fellow galloped back, quite thankful.

The day was clear, the sun bright, and the air bracing. The ride was therefore pleasant and exhilarating, from the variety of fresh objects that attracted their notice, having never been in that part of the country before. On their return, they perceived John and his wife sitting on a bench at the door, with a jorum of ale, and some biscuit beside them. Up started John: "Ifegs, your honour, it wants five-and-thirty minutes of three hours yet." Margaret rose and made her best curtsey. "Sit down, John," said his master; "give the horse to Richard, the Colonel's man, and you can stay with your wife, and return by ten to-morrow morning." "Ah!" returned the grateful fellow, "your honour was always considerate, and takes compassion on a poor fellow who has been starving for months, but who would never touch no vittels that did not belong to him." The gentlemen smiled. "You have a little one, it seems, in your absence," said the Colonel. "So I thought, Sir," replied John; "for I left Madge pretty forward in the thriving way. But the

girl's dead and buried ; so she has took this boy to nurse, belonging to the players here."

" No, Johnny, *no*," interrupted Margaret ; " the bairn don't belong to the player-men, but to some great gentleman, a Barren-knight, or a Lord, I doesn't know which, and my young lady gives out it is her *nephew*, belike. Poor thing ! it was dying, but is now quite hearty. My mistress took on greatly, and was quite miserable, and had a doctor to it twice a day, for she loves it as tho'f it were her own ; and for the matter o'that it may be, for aught I knows. But howsomdever, I'm paid handsome for the nursing it."

" Who is your mistress, Margaret ?" asked the Major anxiously.

" They calls her Miss Irwin, Sir," said the nurse, with a curtesy. " She belongs to the great play-house, and is a great hand at it, the folk says, tho'f I never seed her hact."

Now Margaret had never seen her husband's master, and had totally forgot her mistress was in anywise a relative of his ; so she went on thoughtlessly. " Her old woman, Ann, calls here once a week with money. Mistress has been ill, she says, and is now



in the country, seven miles off, t'other side of the town. It is now six weeks and more sin I has seen her."

The officers now returned to the town, leaving John and Margaret together. The man was equally ignorant that his wife's mistress was his master's sister. And thus it continued, till more important events discovered the affinity.

That evening, the two gentlemen settled the terms, and then removed with their luggage from the inn, to Mr. Larkins's, where we shall leave them for a few days, and return to Mary at the farm-house. *There*, as the spring was advancing, the renovation of the beauties of nature, the budding of the trees, the butter-cup, daisy, primrose, and violet, that now decorated the increasing verdure, with the melody of the feathered warblers that also flitted from bush to bush, daily restored her spirits and her strength. The pure milk, improved and rendered more salubrious from the springing herbage the cows daily cropped, with the home-made loaf and fresh-churned butter, wonderfully contributed to her recovery.

She had brought with her Mr. Forester's MS. tragedy, which she now read attentively.

The language was classically elegant and correct, the conceptions forcible, and the descriptions vivid; but she thought the arrangement of the scenes not sufficiently calculated for dramatic effect. — The principal villain, whose atrocities caused the amiable heroine's sufferings and lamentable death, was delineated with a bold and vigorous pen; but his repentance was, she thought, too *sudden*, if not unnecessary, and not perfectly in character; for, in her judgment, he should have died, as he had lived, *conscience-seared* and *irreclaimable*. Besides, the real and betrothed lover should have *fallen* by the villain's hand, and not survived. This at the conclusion would have heightened the despair and agony of the heroine, and brought the catastrophe about when the interest was wound to the utmost. The frenzy of the miserable *Aledina*, in beholding her murdered lover, and the corpse of her heart-broken father stretched before her view, would then have fuller scope, and better account for the terrific shriek, and her agonized and frantic wildness, till convulsive nature rended her fragile frame.

She likewise ventured to hint, that the following lines, uttered by her distracted father,

when he hears his daughter is carried off, appeared too horrid for stage denunciation, viz.

“ May he that wrong'd us ne'er sleep in peace !  
Oh ! may his guilty head ne'er feel repose !  
On *him* and *his* inflict thy heavy judgment !  
Scatter his race ! annihilate his name !  
When in grim death's last agonies he pants,  
*Prolong* his torments, and *increase* his pain !  
And, when he hopes for rest in dissolution,  
May he not find it, even in the *grave* !”

Having ventured to suggest these hints, advising also a curtailment of metaphorical description, however beautiful for the closet, with a transposition of some scenes for *close* effect, she enclosed the MS., with her penciled remarks, in an elegantly worded letter to the Barrister ; apologizing for the liberties she had taken, and sent it off by the mail-coach for London.

The truth is, Mary was particularly delighted with the piece. Not so much did she advise those alterations from *selfish* motives, but her heart was interested in the literary fame of the man, who, of all others, she most valued.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

**T**HE Barrister, as soon as he had received his MS. back, with our young actress's remarks and suggestions thereon, highly approved of them, and set immediately about making the necessary alterations she had so judiciously recommended: he wrote her a letter of thanks for the very able and critical comments she had made, and assured her, he would implicitly abide by them; that he had no doubt now of the success of his piece; but would defer offering it, till he was certain which of the winter theatres should have the honour to obtain the great accession of her eminent talents: to that theatre would he send it. That as the spring assizes were near at hand, and he had changed his usual circuit, he would take the liberty of personally waiting on her when he returned to town; and, if her arrangements would then permit, he would be happy to escort her to London, and introduce her to the

proprietors of either house ; he had already spoken to them on the subject, and each had solemnly pledged their word to afford her an opening, and were ready to treat with her, and ratify such terms as might be mutually agreed on. He advised her by no means to let the present golden opportunity slip, but strike the iron while it was hot ; lest other offers should be accepted by those gentlemen, as applications were daily made, seconded by considerable interest, which might render it impossible for them, however willing at present, to fulfil their promise to him at a future period.

He recommended her to think seriously of it, and to speak to her present employers ; but if they were unwilling to rescind the articles between them, he would instantly on his arrival wait on them personally, and take the penalty, -whatever it was, wholly on himself. “ And now, my dear Miss Irwin,” added the counsellor, “ I think I hear you exclaim, ‘ How *good*, how *generous* !’ Yet, though I honour and shall abide by your judicious observations, you are guilty of a sad *error in judgment*, if you suppose me so truly *generous* ; but the cause I have in hand is important, and I want an

abler pleader than myself; blame me not, therefore, in wishing to retain so fair an *advocate*, for on *your* display of talent depends the success, by obtaining a patient hearing, and a favourable issue and *verdict* in my behalf; but if you are still so obstinate, to consider yourself my debtor, I will, when we meet, present you with a *legal* claim to recover, and by turning the tables on the lawyer, render *him* your debtor for life."

The contents of this letter tended more to her speedy recovery, than all the milk, country air, or the most eminent prescriptions of the faculty; and she acknowledged *Counsellor* Forester the most able *physician* for *her* disorder, which originated in a depression of the spirits. She now hourly gained strength, and, in a few days, she wrote Mr. Day word, that she felt her health sufficiently re-established to resume the duties of her profession: in return, the acting Manager, by order of the proprietors, informed her, that he would insert her name in the ensuing Monday's bills, for the part of *Violante* in the *Wonder*. Notice was now given at the bottom of the bills, and every box was taken previous to her re-appearance, *after* an absence of nearly two months. Mary ac-

cordingly quitted her country lodgings, and returned with old Ann to her apartments at Mr. Dunn's, which she had retained, during her residence at the farm.

During the fortnight the two friends had resided in the town, they had seen two plays, and had attended the concert; their mornings they devoted to riding, or the coffee house: still, however, they determined to remain *incog.* and, although several of the officers belonging to the Hussars, stared at Colonel Emerson, and imagined they recollected his countenance, which they had seen when quartered in the town where the Doctor and his family resided, still they did not suppose it to be *him*, observing he was in mourning; and knowing that the Major had embarked for the continent towards the fall of last year.

The Colonel too, for obvious reasons, wished not to be recognized by them, as they must have been acquainted with his sister's misconduct, and the disgrace she had brought upon her family; and as to Major Irwin, his person was wholly unknown to them, and both the gentlemen purposely divested themselves of every military appearance in their persons and manner; they likewise ordered

their servants to take their cockades from their hats, as they had previously assumed fictitious names ; the Colonel taking that of Thomason, and the Major that of Edwards, by which only were they known wherever they appeared.

On the Monday following, while these two gentlemen were sipping their coffee, and reading the London papers, a smart little medical man made his appearance, and nodded familiarly to several persons of respectability, who were seated.

“ Ah ! Doctor, how goes it ? What is the news of the day ? ” cried one. “ A fresh packet arrived, no doubt, by that look of business. Sad sickly times, doctor ? ”

“ *Very,* ” replied the Doctor ; “ but, thank God, I have my hands full of employment, that’s some comfort. ”

“ Do you hear the fellow ? ” cried another. “ He returns thanks for the sickness of the season. How many patients have you *buried* lately, Doctor ? ”

“ You are pleased to be facetious, Sir, ” returned the Doctor. “ I have experienced fewer misfortunes of that kind than most of my brethren ; but I may truly call myself a *resurrection-man* ; for, though I may



have *buried* a few, I have raised the dead, that is, more from the brink of the grave, than any of the faculty; I will be bold to say. *Ecce signum!* You see to-night's play-bill. There, gentlemen! Miss Irwin was almost dead; *I* have restored her to life, and the whole town is indebted to me; and I expect they will return me public thanks for the obligation I have conferred on them; for I have recovered both mother and child."

The two friends now raised their eyes, and the Colonel asked, "*Whose* child, Sir?"

"You are a stranger, Sir, I believe," answered the Doctor, "or would not ask the question. Miss Irwin's, Sir; that is, I meant to say, her *adopted* child; and I never dispute a fair lady's word, particularly a patient of mine."

"Now, Doctor, speak the truth," said a fat gentleman present. "What is your real opinion? Various are the reports. Do you really think the child to be her's?"

"Pardon me, Sir," replied the Doctor; "*secrecy* is a branch of our profession, and I never give an opinion without a fee, or being called to a consultation, and particularly as I had not the honour of being accoucheur;

for it was some months old before I attended him ; a very fine boy indeed ; all I can say is, it passes for her deceased *sister's* ; for she is in mourning, and so is the infant. I can only aver, the symptoms are very *strong*, for there is a striking resemblance between them ; but I would not be understood to give the slightest insinuation of the kind, after the cautions I have received."

" I admire your prudent cautions and reserve, Doctor, of all things," said another gentleman, with a significant smile.

" But odso !" said Galen, " I must make haste to secure a seat in the centre box, my usual place, or I shall be too late : it will be an overflow, I dare say, to greet her return."

" All the horse officers will be there to support her, I have no doubt," said the fat gentleman ; " and among the rest, Lord Henry Augustus."

The two friends now listened attentively.

" Of that you may rest assured," returned the Doctor.

" He is bound in honour to support her," said the former ; " for they have furnished *conversation* enough among all the tea and card parties in town. Do you think, Doctor,

there is any truth in the report? You should know."

"Would you have me betray confidence?" replied he. "No, no, catch me at that; all I can safely say is, that, when I attended the child, Lord Henry dropped in one morning, when she was sitting with the infant in her lap; and on seeing me, would have retired, so he called me aside, and bade me be very tender of the young lady's reputation. I wish people would not load me with their confidential secrets, for if I was not as close as a bottle *hermetically* sealed, all my gass of intelligence would have long since evaporated."

"Pshaw!" cried a little old man present. "What is her *private* character or conduct to the world? Let them *look at home*. I go to see her *act*, and if I approve, I applaud; if not, I am free enough to express my dislike; that's all I have to do with performers or their theatre."

The brother and his friend now rose to *depart*, which the Doctor observing, politely bowed to them, and said, "as you seem strangers here, gentlemen, you cannot have witnessed the very fine display of talent that will be exhibited to-night; so let

me recommend you to take places immediately, or you will lose the present opportunity. I am going there now, to secure one for myself; so, if *you* favour me with your *names*, I shall take particular care you shall not be disappointed."

"My good Sir," returned the Colonel, "We thank your officious zeal for your patient; but if we go, we are not particular where we sit. But if our names will oblige you, which seems to be your aim, I am John Doe, and my friend Richard Roe, at your service."

A loud laugh now followed at the Doctor's expence.

"Then you are limbs of the law, gentlemen," replied the Doctor gravely, "and are a pair of *inseparables*, whose acquaintance is rather troublesome, and so——"

"And so, Sir," said the Major, "your servant. We *apprehend* your meaning perfectly, but have no further business with you at *present*."

"I am exceedingly glad to hear it," said the Doctor, as the friends left the coffee-room.

"You look pale, Doctor, and seem alarmed," said the fat gentleman. "Something in

the names of those strangers not very pleasant."

"No, nor in their looks neither; two strapping, formidable fellows. Bailiffs, egad, or police officers I warrant. I have seen their faces about Bow-street or Hatton-garden. I'll swear there is no knowing them by their dress from their superiors; come down after something of consequence; you'll see them on the look-out at the theatre to-night; they have two followers with them, as their servants in disguise. I met them t'other day."

Now this intelligence of the Doctor's, though highly absurd and improbable, was greedily swallowed by the quidnuncs, and circulated in the space of a few hours throughout the town like wild-fire.

"That is a most impertinent puppy," said the Major to his friend, as they proceeded home. "I wonder any persons of sense can employ him; for the town-crier cannot be more communicative."

"He is doubtless clever in his business," said the Colonel; "but I am inclined to think all he says is not gospel."

"You cut him short in his questions; or he would have scraped an acquaintance

with us. We are in no humour to be diverted with his extravagancies. But what the plague made you dub us with such names ? our own were equally unknown."

"Pho! pho!" answered the Colonel, "they were the first that came into my head. John-a-Nokes, or John-a-Stiles would have answered as well. Well, what think you, shall we go, and take places, or not?"

"I am in two minds, and cannot determine," replied the Major. "I confess my curiosity is strongly excited. How eagerly should I clasp her to my heart, after an absence of six years, but for the disgraceful line of life she is engaged in ; and above all, her conduct has rendered the slightest knowledge of her repugnant to my honour and my feelings. Still I confess, I am irresistibly impelled to have one parting gaze at her, and then banish her for ever from my thoughts, as I would have *you* do, my friend."

"If I find her what we have too much reason to fear," said the Colonel, "you may rely on it, Major, I shall be equally solicitous to avoid her, and forego all further hopes and thoughts of the sex, as the bane

of man's happiness. But let us, however, secure two places ; and then we can drop in whenever we like."

" Well, well, be it so," returned the other ; " though I well know I shall not feel very comfortable there ; but you have seen her perform, and cannot have the same curiosity as I may be supposed to have ; therefore you need not accompany me."

" Pardon me there, my dear friend," replied the Colonel. " I by no means think it prudent to let you go there by yourself, among a set of total strangers. I know your natural impetuosity so well, that you could not restrain its feelings, when your heart is so deeply concerned ; the presence of a friend is necessary, to keep you within due bounds, lest any expression might unguardedly escape, and so betray you."

" I fancy you will have occasion for a little prudent advice, *yourself*, my friend," answered the Major ; " for I am conscious, though you say less, you are as much interested about this unworthy sister of mine as I am, though she is no longer worthy our consideration."

" Let us wait till we have irrefragable *proofs* ; mere report, however current, is not

sufficient to justify your total renunciation of an only sister. Think you, I should have shut my arms and my heart to the wretched Olivia, had she not publicly and shamefully eloped, regardless of her own and the reputation of her family? And even now were she to repent, and leave her seducer, though I could never restore her to my favour and affection, yet I should hold myself inexcusable, were I not to save her from sinking."

"There, Colonel, we differ," cried the Major. "If she prove unworthy, I should spurn her, though she lay prostrate, and imploring for forgiveness at my feet, for the blot and stain she had affixed on our name and family, which can never be effaced."

"With all your boasted resolution, Major," said his friend, "you could not withstand the yearnings of brotherly affection; but, as we are now within sight of the theatre, we will see what places are vacant." They accordingly entered the box-office, and took two seats next the centre box, and then returned home, and dined together.

The two officers sat over their wine for a considerable time, and the Colonel observ-



ed his friend to drink more freely than he was usually accustomed to do, nothing however evidently to affect him. He wanted, he said, a glass extraordinary, to put him in good spirits to sit out the play, and enable him to support the sight of a sister, whose presence he almost dreaded to behold ; and the Colonel was obliged to bear him company, and take more than he liked, merely out of compliment. They shortly after ordered tea, which they hastily swallowed, and sallied forth to the theatre, with hearts full of expectancy and trembling agitation, notwithstanding the wine they had taken to counteract those uneasy sensations.

When they arrived, though it wanted a full half hour to the curtain's rising, they found the house nearly filled. Several servants were keeping places, and they had the precaution to send their men for the same purpose, who no sooner beheld their masters, than they instantly rose and left the box. The two gentlemen whispered their servants to bring their great coats for them about ten o'clock, as they intended to leave the theatre after the conclusion of the first piece. This private order did not escape the notice of the vigilant and inquisitive Doctor, who

was seated next box to them, between two others of his acquaintance. "Aye," cried he, with a significant wink, "*there* they are: 'tis as I said: come on *the look-out*: and there their two followers. Desperate ill-looking fellows! *There!* they are giving orders to them to be in waiting when called on. See! how they are eyeing all round. Aye, aye; thank Heaven! *I'm* safe for the present; but we shall see them give somebody a gentle tap on the shoulder, before the play is over, I warrant. Let's have an eye on them."

It is very certain, that the Major's eyes were wandering all over the house, and observing every person that entered the pit and boxes, and he kept occasionally talking apart to the Colonel, who seemed to wish he would not appear so conspicuous. This served to confirm the conjectures and report of the Doctor, and left little doubt of their occupation, though the names of John Doe and Richard Roe, were naturally judged to be fictitious.

Several military gentlemen now made their appearance, flush from the tavern; amongst them, and not the least vociferous, was Lord Henry Augustus. It was evident he was considerably inebriated, and capable of

becoming either very ridiculous or very troublesome. He entered, with two more of his companions, the same box where the Colonel and the Major were seated. He stared rudely at them at first, which the Major returned with a frown ; and presently his lordship left the box, and entered the next, where the Doctor sat, who bowed and smiled to the military hero ; and had a few words of confab with his lordship, who now, in his turn, looked ferociously, whenever the two friends chanced to turn their heads that way.

The play now began. When the first act concluded, “ Now,” cried Hawkins, across the box to Lord Henry, “ now, my lord, for all hands ready to greet your *favourite’s* return. She’ll soon appear.”

“ Aye, my boy ; by all means a *thunderer*. I’ll support her against all opposition,” cried Lord Henry aloud. “ What care I for all the town can say about us ? I am her *friend*, and I value not who knows it. She is a charming creature, and I’ll slit the nose of any man that——”

“ *Silence ? order ! down there,*” was now echoed round the house. At length, the

second act commenced, and *Violante* made her appearance !

The moment our Heroine came forward, one universal burst of acclamation went through the house, and was continued several minutes. She curtsied repeatedly. To say the truth, she was restored to perfect health and animation, and never looked so well in her life. “ There she is ! her identical self,” said the Colonel to the astonished Major ; “ there is no mistaking, for there is *none* like her.”

“ Gracious Heaven ! Can it be ? Can this be the little Mary, the slight little blooming girl, I left six years ago, so *happy* and so *innocent* !” exclaimed the brother with visible emotion.

“ It is indeed the same,” answered his friend. “ Time has caused some alteration in her person, and considerably improved it.”

“ She is indeed,” sighed the agitated Major, “ a most bewitching, most *angelic looking* creature, and *syren-like* can charm, no doubt, and apply those destructive talents to her base pursuits ! Oh ! that her *mind* was equal to her person ! Oh ! that those talents were not thus misapplied and *prostituted* !

and see ! that noble paramour of her's, how he applauds her every sentence ! She doubtless knows he is here, and that confirms her audacity. How could I, in an instant, change those dulcet tones to fear, to tears, and trembling, were I now to reveal myself ! But I'll tear myself away ; I can no longer endure her sight." And he was on the point of quitting the box, when the Colonel was obliged to detain him by force.

" Wait till the play is over, and then use your discretion," said his friend ; " but don't draw the eyes of the audience on us."

" Silence there !" cried out Lord Henry, " *you*, Sirs, *strangers* in the next box."

" Do you speak *to us*, Sir ?" replied the Major, rising.

" Aye, Sir ; to *you*, Sir, or to *any* man, Sir," returned his lordship. " And who are *you*, Sir ?"

" A gentleman, though not *noble*," replied the Major, with heat ; " possessed of as much *honour* as yourself. We are *officers*, Sir."

" Ha ! ha ! ha ! Officers !" laughed out Lord Henry ; " *you* are like officers ! *she-riff* or *police officers*, I believe, no more,

demme ! Mr. *John Doe* or *Richard Roe* !”

“ *Sir* !” exclaimed the Major, starting up ; “ take care what you say, Sir : I shall speak to you after the play.”

“ Why not *now*, my fine fellow ?” said Lord Henry, rising.

The Major now quite enraged, was obliged to be held down by the Colonel, who now calmly replied to the noble hussar, “ A nobleman, like you, my lord, should be above insulting strangers, who never offended you ; when you know more, you’ll repent this conduct.”

“ *Silence*, gentlemen ; *order*, *order* !” echoed round the boxes. They remained tolerably quiet, till near the conclusion of the fourth act, when the interest is worked high between Don Felix and Violante. Lord Henry then began to be clamorous, and exclaimed, “ Bravo ! bravo ! my girl, that’s right, don’t blab, keep the secret ! *bravo*, *bravo* !”

“ *Silence* !” cried the Major, who was all attention to her acting ; “ silence ; hiss-s-s.”

“ Who’s that dares to hiss ?” cried out his lordship, starting up, “ or order me to be silent ?”

“ I dare to do *both*,” returned Mary’s brother aloud.

“ Do you dare, *fellow*, to hiss that lady ?”

“ *Her* or *you*, if I think proper,” cried the Major.

“ Turn out, Sir ; out of the boxes with them,” exclaimed his lordship ; “ they are *sheriff*’s or *police officers* in disguise : out with them.”

The clamour now became general ; and the two friends had like to meet with rough usage, but the Major instantly darted into the box to Lord Henry, and loudly addressed him, “ Whom have you the audacity to call *sheriff*’s *officers*, Sir ?”

“ *You*, Mr. *Doe* or *Roe*, and your companion,” returned his lordship ; “ the Doctor here knows you both, and I’ll *horse-whip* you, for daring to hiss that lady, or me, and for presuming to place yourselves among gentlemen.”

The Major now seized the trembling Doctor, and shaking him violently, exclaimed, “ Thou little villainous composition of lies and mischief ! I’ll grind you to powder in your own mortar, if you don’t instantly pro-

duce your authority for such an infamous fabrication.”

“Take notice, gentlemen, here’s an *assault*! for I’ll be upon oath, they can have no writ against me whatever,” cried the Doctor, in an ague.

“Villain,” vociferated the enraged Major, “I’ll be the death of you.”

Lord Henry now rushed forward, and struck the brother of Mary, who immediately collared his lordship, on which Colonel Emerson forced his way between them.

The play sustained a pause, and our poor Heroine being on the stage, quite alarmed, no sooner heard the well-known sound of her brother’s voice, which she instantly recollected, than, uttering a terrific shriek, exclaimed, “Oh! Heaven shield me! ’tis my *brother’s* voice! Oh! *save him! save him!*” She then fell insensible into Felix’s arm, and was instantly conveyed off the stage.

The word *brother!* was now responded round, and all eyes were drawn to the spot where the scuffle began. “Yes,” cried Major Irwin, “the secret is out, I *am* brother to that unfortunate girl, I left *innocent* and



an *angel*. I am now returned after a six years' campaign, and find her a *disgrace* to her name and her connexions. And *you*, my lord, are implicated in her shame. You must account to *me*, Sir, for that, and the blow you have had the presumption to inflict. Here is my *glove*."

"And here is *mine*," cried my lord. "Demme, Sir, if I balk you, *brother* or *not*, though I believe, 'tis all, all *false*, as the stories circulated about her and me; but true or *false*, I'll defend her, and no man shall *dare* to interfere between us. You'll meet me at —, near —, by *day-light* to-morrow, accompanied by your friend."

"You may depend on us, my lord," said Colonel Emerson; "and in the morning, when you are *sober*, you may recollect *me*, the late Major, now Lieutenant Colonel Emerson at your service."

"Sir," replied his lordship sneering, "I think I recollect the *name*; you had a *sister*."

"Dare again to mention her name," cried the Colonel, now in a rage himself, "and I'll chastise you on the *spot*. You are a disgrace every day to *nobility*, and the name of *soldier*."

The two friends retired. This conversation passed in the box-lobby, where the parties had retreated as soon as Mary had fainted, and the curtain dropped, and in the presence of all the principal gentlemen, who had assembled, and were silent spectators of this very serious and interesting scene ; and during which the terrified Doctor fortunately made his escape.

As Miss Irwin was unable to proceed with, and conclude her part, and it was some time before order was restored in the house, the last act of the play was dispensed with, and the entertainment began. The fat old gentleman in the box, who was a principal person of the town, and a man of great opulence and extensive concerns, who had been present at the coffee-room in the morning, could not help publicly condemning the Doctor, as the author of all this confusion, and the fatal consequences that were likely to ensue : that his communicative talent was now no longer harmless and amusing, but was really become a most dangerous weapon ; and he sincerely wished that his lordship, or either of the other gentlemen, would apply their swords to the oral

aperture of the Doctor's countenance, and amputate the little busy resident within.

The rumour of the intended duel soon reached the ears of the principal magistrate, who, to do him justice, dispatched qualified persons to preserve the peace, and prevent its taking place. But the combatants naturally concluding, as the affair was so public, that means would be taken to prevent the issue, changed their intended route, and met by half-past six next morning, on an extensive moor, thirteen miles distant, and so baffled the vigilance of magistracy.

Both parties were too proud and too much incensed to listen to any apology ; and their seconds measured the distance of eight paces. Lord Henry remarked, " this was the fourth affair of honour in which he had the happiness to be engaged ; that he had always given his antagonist a *pill* ; and was ready to accommodate the present gentleman with as many as he had the stomach to swallow." This piece of ill-timed and vulgar wit, though it proved him not deficient in animal courage, gave a lamentable specimen of callous insensibility and a bad heart, and added much to the just indignation of the Colonel and the Major, who, as he

took his station, coolly observed, "he had often combated the enemy in the field of battle, but never so great an enemy to the repose of domestic felicity, or one whose presence would be less regretted by society."

Being now prepared, and the signal given, both gentlemen fired together, but without effect. Captain Hawkins now endeavoured to interpose, but neither Lord Henry nor the Major would accept of mediation.

Their pistols were re-loaded. At the second discharge the Major received a ball in the left shoulder; he staggered, but seized his other pistol. At the third discharge, another ball unfortunately struck him in the fleshy part of the thigh, and he fell.

"There," cried his lordship, "I knew it; never missed my man yet, *demme!*"

Colonel Emerson, now almost frantic at his friend's disaster, and the insulting, mean triumph of his adversary, cried out, "Keep your ground, my Lord; you must now account with *me*, for the unmanly and unfeeling mode of expression you used towards me, when you mentioned my wretched sister. None but a cold-blooded villain could be guilty of such baseness; so make ready,

for with God's blessing, I shall give *you* a pill, as an awful warning how you trample on the feelings of injured and insulted brothers ! I have punished one of your lordship's companions already, as you must have heard, and I shall not spare you, depend on't."

"Have at you, then, my brave fellow," cried his Lordship ; "I'll wing you to a certainty."

They fired together, and Lord Henry fell speechless and weltering in his blood ! The Colonel's ball entered his mouth, carried away four of his Lordship's teeth, lacerated his left jaw, and lodged deep in the back of his neck. The Surgeon shook his head, and declared the wound of a most dangerous tendency.

The Colonel now asked Captain Hawkins if he was satisfied, or wished to espouse his friend's part.

To which the Captain replied, "that he by no means approved of his lordship's conduct from the beginning ; that he had done all in his power to persuade him to apologize, and could not help owning his friend had merited his misfortune."

The parties were now, with the assistance

of their respective surgeons, placed in their carriages which brought them to the spot, and were gently conveyed back to town.

Major Irwin's wounds bled profusely ; but the Surgeon observed, they were not likely to prove mortal, as he had no doubt of easily extracting the balls. Whereas his lordship's medical friend formed little hopes of his recovery ; so very difficult would the extraction of the ball prove, and the dreadful fracture he had sustained.

Before ten o'clock the news of this desperate affair was spread over the town, and no officious doctor was now necessary to add a single comment to what was already made ; for ere the parties could reach their respective lodgings, *report* had laid them *both dead* on the field, and had dangerously wounded the *seconds*. Nay, some better informed than the rest perhaps, insisted, that the Surgeons themselves had quarrelled on the spot, and bled each other profusely. In short, what will not rumour circulate, and credulity devour ?

The situation of the unhappy subject of this unfortunate quarrel, was in a state little short of absolute distraction, when the fatal news reached incautiously her ears. Old

Ann, who when she was informed of her young master's arrival had run all over the town in quest of him, and had renewed her enquiries early that morning, no sooner heard the account of the duel confirmed, and its dreadful consequences, than she ran back wringing her hands, and exclaiming, "her dear young *master* was *murdered*!" Unfortunately it struck her mistress's ears, who fell successively from one fit into another, so that no hopes were entertained of her surviving the night.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

**V**IOLENT and convulsive were those fits, and it was thought by the physician, whom the good-natured Mr. Dunn had called in, that they would either terminate the sufferer's existence the ensuing night, or end in a severe derangement of intellect; which latter proved to be the melancholy case. In her wild distraction, she tore her hair, her flesh, and would have thrown herself from the windows, had not Mr. Dunn with all his strength been obliged to restrain her; in short, it was now found indispensably necessary to have recourse to a strait-waistcoat, and other methods were used, as are usual in cases of insanity.

Though the opinion of the public was heretofore inclined to favour Mary, the arrival and sudden appearance of her brother, the terror and consternation she betrayed, when she discovered him; his strong expressions, and the fatal termination of the quarrel now made strongly against her, and



from the general stir it has caused throughout the town, it was hinted, however great her abilities, that her presence at the theatre in future would be better dispensed with, than be the occasion of any future uproar or confusion that might probably ensue ; and in this, the proprietors perfectly agreed: accordingly Mr. Day enclosed and returned her the articles of their agreement, and gave her a full release and discharge therefrom, adding, “ that he was sorry for the occasion, but it was no longer for the *reputation*, nor the *welfare* of his theatre, that she should continue a member of it ; and, he must, injustice to himself, acquaint the Viscountess Armsfield with the occasion of her dismissal, which he would soften as well as he could, lest more injurious reports might reach her Ladyship’s ears.” This he sent by his servant two days after the unhappy affray ; when the man returned quite in terror, declaring, that the young lady was in a state of absolute and incurable insanity ; that her screams and ravings were too horrid to be heard ; that the house was all in confusion, and the neighbours were sadly disturbed and distressed.

This intelligence soon changed reproach

into commiseration for the unhappy sufferer under the worst of all human afflictions; frequent enquiries were made after her health, but the accounts still continued deplorable and hopeless. It was a full month before the frantic raving subsided, and settled into a state of apparent fixed despondency, from which the Doctor said, time so far from relieving, would but confirm her melancholy; and it was now in actual contemplation to place her in a state of confinement, under the proper medical care of a physician experienced in that distressing malady. Her old trusty confidant and nurse, the faithful Ann, was in a state of distraction little short of her mistress's. She had found out the lodgings, where the Major and the Colonel resided, and was daily in her enquiries after her young master's health. Even Mr. and Mrs. Lar-kins, took compassion on the old woman, who seemed literally heart-broken; at length, she was admitted to the presence of Colonel Emerson, to whom she related her mistress's shocking situation. We may well conceive the agony of mind that worthy man endured at the dismal account.

He told Ann in return, that the Major

was now quite recovered, but unable as yet to leave his chamber ; that he dared not to communicate this dreadful news for some time to come ; but would take the earliest opportunity to make him acquainted with it ; conjured the nurse to spare no expence whatever for medical advice for her mistress's recovery, that he would be answerable for every requisite attention, and he then put fifty pounds into old Ann's hands to supply every present emergency.

We must now return to Lord Henry Augustus, who lingered for several weeks in excruciating agony. The extraction of the ball baffled the skill of the most experienced practitioners, for it had worked downward between the shoulder-blade, and the vertebræ of the back, which rendered his recovery hopeless. Finding himself near his end, he had the candour to confess his error, and sign a written declaration, wherein he acknowledged he had brought his death on himself ; freely forgave the Major ; and solemnly asserted his innocence of all connexion with his sister, and believed that young lady cruelly aspersed ; to whom and her brother he bequeathed, as a slight recompense, the sum of a thousand

pounds each. Two days after this had been legally witnessed, this unhappy young nobleman breathed his last ; in the very vigour of manhood, being only in his thirty-fourth year ; he was followed to the grave by all his brother officers in town ; in grand military procession. All proceedings against Colonel Emerson were now dropped, who had produced sufficient bail for his appearance, should a trial be instituted.

Ann now kept constantly calling, to know, if her young master would condescend to see her ; but though Colonel Emerson entreated that he would grant his old nurse that permission, he still refused ; and notwithstanding the declaration of the dying Lord Henry had cleared poor Mary's character with respect to himself, still the circumstance of the *child* sunk deeply into the brother's mind, nor had the repeated protestations of the old woman to the Colonel, that it was really her *deceased* sister's, and not her mistress's, the slightest effect ; for this but convinced him more of an artful collusion between Mary and her confidant to impose upon his affectionate credulity ; and it doubly aggravated his unhappy sister's guilt in his eyes, by laying the shame

upon an innocent and dead sister, whose serious disposition and retired life precluded the most distant supposition of the kind. "No, Colonel, I will never behold them more. The old woman is altogether as bad as her mistress. My poor innocent Hester ! dare to calumniate the sacred ashes of the virtuous dead ! who cannot now defend herself ! Oh, this is the confirmed atrocity of a hardened and abandoned wanton ; and I for ever abjure her !"

The indefatigable friend, still inclined to think Mary innocent, and deeply afflicted at the melancholy state she continued in, now ventured to mention to Edward her most pitiable condition. The account shocked him, he turned pale, and, deeply sighing, exclaimed !

"Poor wretch ! *Guilt*, Colonel, conscious *guilt*, terror-struck with the mischief she has occasioned, has affected both her head and heart ; for she was a girl of exquisite sensibility. Unhappy creature ! that sensibility perhaps has caused her shame. May Heaven restore her to repentance, by first restoring her senses ; and then my pity and forgiveness shall not be withheld."

“ Will you not venture to behold her ?” said the Colonel; “ the sight must be most afflicting, yet she cannot know you in her present state, and sure one parting look at the sad ruins of so intelligent a mind, heart-rending as the scene will prove, must imprint an awful lesson of the instability of human endowments, and render us submissive to the chastening hand of an all-ruling Providence, who, for his own inscrutable purposes, inflicts the scourge of calamity, that eventual good may arise. Such is my firm persuasion, and thus fortified, I will summon resolution to behold the suffering victim ; will you accompany me when you are able ?”

The brother paced the room with strong emotion, and agitated steps, his head drooping, and his arms folded in profound thought ; at length, stretching forth his hand, he grasped his friend's ; “ I will ; I will summon up my fortitude ; for once, and for the last time, perhaps, venture to behold her !”

“ Oh !” cried he, with a sigh, that almost burst his bosom, “ 'twill be a miserable interview ! You know not how dearly I once loved her : she was my favourite, my adored

Mary ! once a smiling seraph ! but *now* ! support me, Heaven ! through the rending and terrific shock."

The Colonel was particularly happy he had gained thus far upon his friend ; for he entertained a distant hope that this interview, repeated at intervals, might tend to recal her scattered intellects, and rouse her from her state of mental stupefaction and despondence.

The next time Ann came, the Colonel prevailed on the Major to see the old woman, who was really heart-broken at his rejection of his old nurse. When she approached him, the poor old creature sobbed aloud, and threw herself upon her knees and embraced his feet. The brother, quite overcome by the recollection of former happier days, gently raised her ; " Poor old soul ! " he cried, " still faithful and affectionate ! this is a miserable meeting, Ann ! "

" Oh ! Master Edward ! Master Edward," sobbed the poor old woman ; " I little thought my poor old eyes would meet you thus : but you are alive ! and recovered, and that's one comfort ; and the sight of you, if you speak *kindly* to her, will, if any

thing can, restore my sweet dear Miss Mary to her senses : I know it will. Oh ! she has been *vilely* slandered ; *cruelly*, *basely*, *wickedly* wronged ! for she is an angel, if ever one was sent from Heaven. Oh ! I could tell you all about it, if I durst ; but I should be a parjury old wretch, if I did ; but Mrs. Forester, and the good Parson Percy knows the whole truth : and they will explain it all ; but 'tis all along of this *misfortunate babe* ; I wish it was in Heaven ! for it has brought nought into the world but sorrow and ruination with it."

" Well, Ann, don't talk of this now ; I cannot bear the subject ; how does my sister ? Is there any likelihood, any distant hope of her recovery ? "

" Alack the day ! " cried Ann, " I fear not ; she sits for hours endways, folding her arm across her bosom with her sweet eyes cast up, and speaks not a word to nobody : and then, for half the day, keeps walking about the room as fast as any thing. I speaks to her ; but she minds me not ; sometimes, when she sees the tears pour down my ould cheeks, she comes to me, and says, ' You are a naughty child



for crying, so, so,' and then pats my cheek. 'Don't cry,' she says; '*there, there,* be good; you never killed your brother. Nobody must cry but me!' and then, if I attempt to look cheerful, and talk to her; 'for *shame!* you must not *laugh*, or you *mock* me.'"

"Does she know you?" asked the brother.

"Sometimes I thinks she does; for she keeps looking at me so for half an hour together, and then shuts her eyes, and puts her pretty hand across her forehead, as if she strove to think; and asks me, 'where have you buried him? Ah! *there! there!* see! see! the red drops that fall upon his grave!'"

"This is dreadful, Ann! tell me, how does she rest?"

"Lord-a-marcy me! my dear Master; I don't think she ever sleeps; tho'f she goes to bed betimes; but she keeps awake, and her poor eyes keeps a wandering, a wandering so; and yet she eats hearty, and often, and I wonders at that. I thinks for sartin the stuff the Doctor gives her to set her asleep, does my poor Miss Mary no good, for after she takes it, she is quite

fidgety ; and wants to get up, then I calls up Mr. Dunn."

"Who is Mr. Dunn?" asked the Major.

"He is our *landlord*, Master," said Ann, "an *Irishman*; but for all that, he is a merry good-natured soul as can be; she is afraid of him, and yet is very fond of him; she smiles when she sees him, and is quite settled; and will take any thing from his hand. He, saving your presence, d—ns the doctor, at which she laughs; and do you know, t'other night, when she wouldn't take her sleepy stuff, I calls him up, and tould him; on which he took it from me, and threw it away: I was quite *astounded*, I may say; so, he goes down, and brings up a goblet of Madeery, and hot water, and cinnamon, and gave it her; and she drank it all up at a draught; and would you believe it? he sat down in the chair by her bed-side, and sang her to sleep; that he did, for she went fast off, and never waked, no, not till next day at noon."

"And how did she appear *then*?" asked the Colonel.

"Why, your honour, she was quite another body for the best part of the day; for she wanted to go down and walk in their garden;

but dear me ! she is too weak for that yet, the Doctor says, and so I think ; though at times she walks up and down the room so."

"I think this Doctor," said the Colonel to the brother, "wants to make a job of it ; and Mr. Dunn is by far the best physician. I wish he would prescribe the Madeira for her every night, since it composes her to rest ; it is *rest* she wants, I see."

"Does she ever talk of me, Ann ?" asked the Major.

"No, never, Master," replied the old woman, "though I mentions you often ; then she turns sharp upon me, and looks so ; and shakes her head and sighs, and cries out, 'poor *Mary*, poor *thing* ! see they are all gone from her ! all her friends gone, gone to bed in Heaven ! *There ! there !* she sits by herself, shivering in the snow ! All say she is a naughty bad one, but she is not. Bring her here, warm her ; poor thing ! how cold is her heart ; but don't let the doctor see her, he'll kill her as he did me.' Oh, Master Edward ! it breaks my poor old heart, to hear her go on so."

“Has she not any recollection of any person? Does she ever mention any names?”

“She talks of one William, ‘sweet William; she’ll wear him as a nosegay in her bosom;’ and then she pulls out her mother’s picture, she always has it round her neck, and speaks to it all manner of things. ‘Hush! hush!’ she sometimes says to it, ‘you are very good, you don’t scold me, never, never;’ and then she puts it next her heart, and smiles; but she mentions no names.”

“Here, Ann, my good old woman,” said the Major; “take this miniature of mine. I had this likeness done lately by an eminent French artist; I intended it for her, place it in her sight, and observe if it attracts her notice.”

“Aye marry, that I will,” said Ann. “May I never squint but ’tis the very *moral* of you! what fine regimentals!”

“I shall be able to go out next week, and I shall dress myself in uniform, and wait upon her, and see, if she then can call me to mind; if not, I fear she is past cure.”

Ann now took her leave. “If she don’t *shun*, or appear *afraid* of me, it will give

me some hopes. I think, Colonel, I had better write to our friends, Mr. Percy and Mrs. Forester. I will explain every thing to them; if they know her to be *innocent*, they will doubtless come to visit her; and then the presence of such old and long esteemed friends, if any thing can call back reason to her seat, will have the wished-for effect."

"It is by far the wisest plan you can adopt," said the Colonel; "and I could almost ensure its success."

The Major, thus encouraged by his friend, sat down, and wrote a very long and interesting letter to Mrs. Forester; he mentioned the circumstance of the *child*, the reports it had caused to his sister's prejudice, mentioned also the duel he had on her account, its consequences, that she had lost her situation, not only from the injurious reports which were credited, but from her present utter incapability, as she was in a state of the most hopeless insanity; he then described her deplorable condition; and conjured them by their former friendship, to pay the poor sufferer a personal visit, and advise him then how to dispose of her; as they were at present among *strangers*, who took no interest in their misfortunes."

Ann, it seems, had brought the *articles* Mr. Day's servant had left for Mary ; but it remained untouched, till the old woman judging the packet might require an answer, brought it to the Major's lodgings, and gave it into the Colonel's care to deliver to her young master, a few days before she had an interview with the brother.

The Colonel now took the letter the Major had penned ; and immediately went and put it into the office.

The brother accompanied by his friend, now walked out every day for the benefit of the air ; and his health and strength rapidly improved.

Mrs. Forester no sooner received the important letter from young Irwin, which announced the dismal tidings, than she flew on the wings of agitation and impatience to that venerable old gentleman Mr. Percy ; and laid before him the dreadful and distressing account. Great indeed was the grief of those amiable and worthy friends ; they instantly determined what to do. Mr. Percy in less than two days procured a clerical gentleman to officiate for him during his absence ; and Mrs. Forester and he took a post-chaise, and set off on their melancholy journey, to ad-

minister every comfort their advice and presence could bestow.

We shall leave these worthy persons on the road ; and now advert to the letter which Mr. Day dispatched to Viscountess Armsfield, announcing, “ the necessity he was under to cancel the articles that had passed between him and Miss Irwin, whom he had engaged at the express recommendation of her ladyship ; he lamented that youth, beauty, and such abilities as she confessedly possessed, should be accompanied by such glaring misconduct ; that she was not only become the subject of universal reprehension, but it was no longer for the safety, nor the reputation of the community of which he was the ostensible head, that she should by any means continue to be a member of it ; that one nobleman had lost his life on her account ; that her brother lay desperately wounded at the same time, that, stung with *shame, dread, or remorse*, she had suffered a severe deprivation of intellect, under which she still laboured ; that he himself had long wavered in his opinion of her from her fascinating manners, and the stories she had circulated relative to an infant she had now with her, till *concurring* circumstances

rendered her conduct *too apparent* and beyond conjecture. He trusted therefore this explanation would thoroughly acquit him in her ladyship's eyes, who must have been equally imposed on as himself by the most insinuating and loveliest woman, to *appearance*, he ever beheld."

This letter arrived at their seat, at the very time the Viscount and his lady were entertaining a large party of their friends, among whom were Sir William Rosebury and his *family*, Captain Mildmay, Colonel Cameron, and Dr. Andrew M'Lancie, Mrs. Butcher, and Mrs. Euston. Counsellor Forester, Sir William's relative, and intimately acquainted with the Viscount, had arrived but the day before, (previous to his going a north-western circuit,) with the pleasing news, that the long depending cause between that nobleman, and the executors of the late General Eastlake, in the India Company's service, who died in the Decan, was at length happily decided in his lordship's favour, as the real heir at law to the general, who, it was, after a long contest, proved had died without legitimate issue; by which definitive decision, that worthy nobleman gained an acquisition of



120,000*l.* to his property. In this important cause the abilities of the barrister had ample scope to display themselves; he cleared away the obstacles that were thrown in to impede the course of justice, exposed the fallacies and perjuries of suborned witnesses, and substantiated the Viscount's claim and title beyond a doubt.

The account of the fracas at the theatre, and the duel that followed, with the occasion of the disturbance, had been imperfectly copied into some of the London prints from the provincial paper of that district; and had met the eyes of the present distinguished party at his lordship's, and, as there were no names mentioned, but a most beautiful and *celebrated actress*, her *brother*, and his *friend*, and a young *nobleman*, belonging to the Hussars, quartered there, various were the conjectures formed; it was recollected by the Counsellor and the Viscountess, that *this* was the very theatre to which our *Heroine* belonged, but not the most distant idea was harboured, that *she* was at all implicated; and Mr. Forester, having so very recently received his MS. tragedy back from her fair hand, with her very able and judicious remarks, it seemed *impossible* she could be concerned.

Judge then the grief and consternation of all present, when the Viscountess letting the letter fall from her, clasped her hands and exclaimed, “ If this be true, there is no virtue in woman !” The Viscountess’s agitation being so apparent, his lordship took the letter, read it with silent attention and concern, and handed it to Sir William and his lady, who gave it at last to the barrister. Words can but faintly depict the agony of mind that young gentleman endured ; it was a sorrow of the most exquisite anguish, it fell like a thunderbolt upon his heart, and in a moment crushed his fondest hopes of future happiness with a woman, whom reason, judgment, congeniality of sentiment and disposition had hitherto approved ; but of whom now to entertain a thought, would be a dereliction of all *honour* and *rectitude of principle* ! The colour vanished from his cheek ! his whole frame shook with emotion ; and he must have fallen to the ground, had not Sir William, knowing the conflict in his breast, caught his arm, and led him to another apartment, where he threw himself on a couch, and burst into tears.

This letter threw a considerable alloy on this otherwise cheerful and domesticated

circle. Mary had been a particular favourite with them all; her modest unassuming deportment, and the powerful developement of her talents had won their esteem, and captivated their understandings; and Doctor M'Lancie declared he never was so mistaken in a case before, in aw his extansive practice. "Gin this *latter* be fact," cried he, "'tis ainly a proof that beauty like hers, can nae mare expect in her exposed line of life to escape contamination, than that a rich man, with aw deference to the present company, can hope to enter the gates of paradise; and I feel muckle joy that the bonny lass, Miss Thompson, is far awa fra sic a scene o' tamptation, as it would cast a stain on the name of the immortal poet her countryman."

Captain Mildmay swore, "it was all a *d——d falsehood*, that the newspapers all *lied*; they had killed *him* in fower separate engagements, and that this letter might be *forged*, as easy as a *seaman's* will;" but the Viscountess shook her head, and replied, "she knew Mr. Day's hand, and he was a man of too much veracity to doubt his word."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

**T**HE conflict in young Forester's bosom was extreme. The arguments of his relation, the Baronet and his lady, to dissuade him to cast our Heroine from his thoughts, were of no avail whatever ; her image was too deeply engraven on his heart to be eradicated by all they could adduce. Sir William and his amiable consort had long noticed his partiality towards her, and had often rallied him on the subject ; but they little imagined he was so seriously attached, as the present disastrous tidings had thus plainly demonstrated.

The shock this amiable and accomplished man now received, totally deprived him of the power of mixing with the present circle. He kept his chamber for two days, and when he appeared, his looks were so pale and so altered, that they entertained the most alarming fears for his health ; he shunned intercourse, and indulged in many a solitary ramble. Captain Mildmay was the only person whose company he seemed at

all to covet ; that honest officer still defended the character of his little *Rosebud*. He still swore vehemently it was all an infamous *lie* and *forgery* ; that all Managers were alike, a set of *white-livered, callous-gizzard* fellows, jealous of merit in man or woman ; that she was envied by both sexes, for her superior beauty and abilities ; and as for quarrelling and *fighting*, that he did not wonder at, for he should not be surprised, if half the ladies had torn each others' caps to pieces, as well as the men go to logger-heads on her account.

These sentiments of the Captain endeared the old commander to the Barrister, who found some consolation to his affliction ; so certain it is, we are fond of the society of any person who defends the character of those who are dear to us.

Mr. Forester now determined to write to his aunt, at Slope-Lawn Cottage, mentioning the paragraph in the newspapers, and the dreadful confirmation contained in the proprietor's letter, which he himself had read ; he therein declared and depicted the tortures of his mind, and the faint hopes he still would flatter himself with, that circumstances were malevolently exaggerated ; par-

ticularly when her *insanity* was insisted on, as a proof of her guilty remorse. This, he said, led him to doubt the veracity of the cruel intelligence, for he had very recently received a long letter from Miss Irwin, relative to a MS. of his, in which her sound judgment, taste, and discriminating powers of mind were elucidated beyond a doubt. It therefore appeared *impossible*, to him, that such *strength of intellect*, as she evidently possessed so very lately, could be so suddenly overthrown. He then conjured his aunt, to whom he had openly avowed his attachment, that she would lose no time in ascertaining the truth, and to write to him as soon as possible to ease his doubts. Captain Mildmay approved of this letter, and bade him cheer up, and hope for the best.

Post after post arrived, but brought no answer from his aunt. This now, almost threw him into despair. He judged she had heard and believed the reported news, that she was ashamed to write, knowing she had encouraged her propensity for the *stage*, to the alluring temptations of which he could not but attribute our poor Mary's downfall. Shocked, and convinced, as he now was, that

this once estimable girl was lost to herself and to the world, pity, the most poignant pity for her unhappy malady, filled his compassionate bosom, and he resolved to ride post to his aunt, to know the worst, and consult with that once tender and affectionate friend, who took the interest of a parent in all her concerns, on the proper means for restoring the miserable sufferer to her pristine soundness of mind and intellectual faculties.

With this determination, he, disguising his intention, pleaded to the Viscount some urgent professional business, and quitted their hospitable seat early on the ensuing morning. Agitated with fearful anxiety, this disconsolate lover travelled with indefatigable haste, and arrived, harrassed in mind and body, at Slope-Lawn Cottage, the residence of his aunt. To his utter disappointment he found that she and her reverend friend, Mr. Percy, had hired a post-chaise, and had set off in great grief and alarm on a long journey; but they did not leave word *where*; they only said, it would probably be two or *three* weeks before they returned. Thus perplexed and bewildered, he determined to proceed to the destined spot, which alone could

satisfy his apprehensions, and personally obtain a confirmation or refutation of the dreadful account that harrassed and disturbed his peace. In the prosecution of which melancholy journey we shall now leave him, and return to our poor afflicted sufferer.

Mary, as soon as old Ann had placed the miniature of her brother full in her view, snatched it up, and looked wistfully at it a long time ; she shook her head, and laid it down and sighed heavily. Ann thinking the sight of it grieved her mistress, was going to remove it, but she pushed the old woman away, and said, “ You wicked old wretch ; you shan’t take that handsome officer away, for he looks so *kind* at me ! He don’t make love and tell *lies*, and cut my poor heart in two. No—no—no ; he shall stay, and keep company with this good lady.” So saying, she pulled her mother’s picture from her bosom and kissed it. “ There, kiss that lady, and be friends : there, there ; see how fond they are of me, and of each other. Oh ! I’m quite happy ! I have got two friends who won’t scold me, and you may go about your business, old woman ; I don’t want you now.”

The old nurse was much pleased to hear



her talk thus, though still incoherently ; and ventured to say, “ That is your brother, my dear Miss Mary ; don’t you know him ? ”

“ Oh yes ! ” cried she, “ very well ; they killed him abroad ! I saw it myself, I saw them fighting. Look ! look ! see ! his coat is all over blood ! Yes, he is *dead*, he won’t speak to me ! So is sister, so is mother, so is father, so am I ; all, all, dead, and in our graves, deep, deep. *Hush* ! don’t disturb us.” She then placed both miniatures in her bosom, and closed her eyes with a placid smile, and sunk back in the armed chair, into a profound slumber, the first she had experienced in the day-time, since her distressing malady.

It was at this very crisis Major Irwin, accompanied by his friend Colonel Emerson, had ventured to pay a visit to his poor sister. All their native courage and fortitude, and no men ever possessed more, now failed them, when they beheld the ravages that dreadful affliction had caused in that once lovely countenance and form ; the face was indeed the same, but all colour had fled ; her elegant symmetry still the same ; though worn and emaciated was her figure, yet still was there a placid smile upon her elegant

features ; a serenity which *guilt* could never yield, and which now struck these agonized beholders with a certain conviction of her innocence.

“ Oh, earth and heaven ! and is it thus I behold thee, dearest, loveliest, best, and most idolized of sisters ! How have a few short weeks transformed thee ! When last I beheld thee, though with the eye of fatal prejudice, I owned thy all-commanding powers of fascination ! now *lost ! extinct !* Accursed be the hour my presence caused this change ! Accursed be the moment my mad impetuosity hurried me to resent indignities unworthy calm reflection, which occasioned those fatal effects that followed !” Here the perturbation of his mind, thus loudly vented, and impossible to restrain, awoke the slumbering Mary, who, seeing both their figures closely seated beside her, first stared wildly, then, putting her soft hand over her afflicted brother’s face, and perceiving the large drops pour down his manly cheeks, wiped them with her white handkerchief, and said, “ Don’t *cry*, that’s so *childish* ; I can’t cry, I wish I could ; it would ease my poor heart ! but you are a wicked man, to drag us back to earth again ! Oh ! we were all

so happy in *Heaven*, out of this wicked world, where is nothing but *lies, falsehood, ruin, and murder!* Oh, I was so happy just now !” And she kept gazing at her brother with a stedfast look, till her eyelids insensibly closed, and she sunk again into a profound sleep.

“ Come,” cried the Colonel, “ let us return: this is the very crisis of her disorder, and I foresee the dawnings of returning reason. Our longer stay will but impede its course, and is utterly useless and improper ; let us speak to her good landlord below, and tell him to administer another cordial of *Madeira*, and if agreeable, to sing her to sleep, as before.”

The friends now retired and spoke to Mr. Dunn, who promised to observe their orders ; but could not help remarking, “ that in his humble opinion, a warm tumbler of good *currant whiskey* would have a much better effect.” The Major frowned, and said, “ this was no time for unseasonable levity,” but Dunn, with a most serious face, and with tears in his eyes, owned “ he meant what he said in *sober sadness*, but would do as required.” They both now returned to their lodgings.

The good-natured landlord failed not to fulfil his promise to the gentlemen. Mary continued the greater part of the day asleep, and when she opened her eyes, asked where she was? Ann, who was attentively watching by her mistress, answered, "Here, my dear Miss Mary, in your own lodgings at Mr. Dunn's; don't you know him?" "I think I do," said Mary, "and I think I know you too?" What is your name? "Ann, my dear lady, your old nurse, who has lived with you, ever since you was born." "Ann! Ann!" repeated Mary, old nurse Ann! I thought she was dead and buried long ago; but you are very like her, only you look so sad." "I should be quite as merry as a cricket, if I saw you better," cried the old woman. "Why? what's the matter? I am quite well, and very hungry; what's for dinner?" "I have got a nice young *rabbit* for you, my dear, shall I lay the cloth?"

"Do, do, and make haste; for I must get ready for the play to-night; so help me to lay out my things."

"Time enough, my dear child, when you have dined;" cried Ann. "Marcy be gracious to me! she begins to recollect a

bit." and away went Ann down stairs to Mrs. Dunn ; who told her husband, he being just come home to his tea.

" Aye ?" cried the worthy Irishman. " St. Patrick be praised for that. I'll make her a nice warm goblet to-night, and sing her one of my best Irish planxties, to hush her to sleep ; for by the powers, 'tis that what she wants more than any thing else to set her poor head and heart to rights."

Nothing would satisfy Mary after she dined heartily, but Ann must lay out two or three of her dresses ; which the old woman spread on the bed. The poor invalid viewed them with seeming pleasure, and then ordered Ann to call a coach to take her to the theatre.

" Oh, sartinly," cried her old attendant, " by all means ; but I think you are stout enough to walk it. Suppose you try ?"

Mr. Dunn now came up stairs ; " ah, Miss Mary," cried he, " where have you been all this time ?"

" I have been in the country, Sir," replied our Heroine, quite pleased at seeing him ; " and am just come home, to dress for the play."

" That's right, come down stairs with me,

agrah, and we'll take a turn in our garden first," said the landlord, " while Ann calls a coach."

To humour her, they put on her bonnet, and wrapt a silk shawl around her ; and the good man supported her tottering steps down stairs, and led her into his little garden. The evening was mild and serene, and the sun near setting ; the birds were warbling their evening hymn ; and nature looked cheerful. Mary felt the air revive her at first ; she took two or three gentle turns leaning on Mr. Dunn's arm, but she soon grew tired, and found the air too powerful.

Accordingly she said she would return up stairs, and not go to the theatre that evening, and bade Ann go with her apology.

" Oh ! to be sure," said the old woman ; " but it will be time enough yet."

The air had a soporific effect on Mary, and she consented to be put to bed ; shortly after, Mr. Dunn presented her with the goblet of warm wine and water, which she finished at the second draught ; and said, " she felt it comfort her." The Irishman now tuned up his pipes, and as he possessed a clear and melodious voice, he sang her in

a very short time into a calm and profound repose.

We shall leave her thus for the night, and return to the Major and his friend. They went, and had their dinner at a tavern, and did not return to their lodgings till past nine in the evening; on their arrival, they were informed that an old gentleman, a clergyman and a lady, had called to let the Major know they had just come a long journey, and begged to see him at their inn as soon as possible.

“As I live,” cried the Major, “’tis Mrs. Forester and Mr. Percy. I must immediately wait on them: so, Colonel, you must excuse me, for, in all probability, I shall sup with them to-night.”

Away the Major posted, on the wings of hope and anxiety. The meeting between these old and tried friends after an absence of so many years, and particularly at this critical period, was affecting in the extreme. The Major rushed into the arms of his venerable tutor, and Mrs. Forester received from him the most affectionate and dutiful embrace.

To the brother’s ardent enquiries about the child which the prevailing rumour, and an

unfortunate coincidence of circumstance seemed to substantiate the charge of its being the offspring of Mary; he conjured Mrs. Forester and his reverend friend, Mr. Percy, to inform him of the truth; and as the old nurse referred him to them for the particulars, from *them* he sought to be relieved from his doubts and anxiety on a subject which weighed heavily on his heart. As to its being Hester's, he could scarcely credit it; for Mary in her letters to him, though she mentioned her sister's death, never gave the least hint whatever of her having had a child, or of her *marriage*; but were it even so, it was the height of folly and absurdity, had it even been her *own* unfortunate offspring, to travel with it in so public a manner, in a profession, of all others, the most liable to be calumniated. Something therefore *more* than common could only account for this rash step, though nothing could justify the measure: he therefore hoped from their friendship an elucidation of this dark and mysterious affair, which had produced such fatal results.

“ My dear Edward,” replied Mrs. Forester, “ as you appeal to us for the truth, which we, doubtless, would have ever con-



cealed from your knowledge, but that the reputation of the injured Mary has so fatally suffered; yet in explaining the secret, we are reluctantly compelled still to wound your feelings; for we in justice must clear the character of the *living*, by fixing the *stain* where only it lies, on the *memory* of the *deceased*, and unfortunate Hester."

This truly worthy lady then gave the Major a full, clear, and circumstantial account of Hester's seduction by the villain Solomon Saintbury; her confession to Mrs. Forester, her dying agony and remorse, and her last request to Mary, who had arrived express to bestow her forgiveness on her repentant sister, for the injuries she had conspired with Saintbury to inflict on that invaluable and affectionate girl. The amiable woman then depicted, in energetic terms, the solemn and awful scene at parting, the dying request, and the fatal and still more solemn oath, that Mary took in *their* presence, "*never to part from the infant*, but be to it a *mother*." The religious fulfilment of which awful vow, she persevered in, contrary to every advice which she and Mr. Percy could bestow; though repeatedly cautioned of the dreadful conse-

quences to her *reputation* and peace of mind.

“ In this one instance alone has she ever disobeyed us,” added Mr. Percy. “ She has ever been a pattern of rectitude, and constantly in her letters unfolded every circumstance and transaction that befel her. Mrs. Forester and I have brought these letters with us, which you shall see; you will therein behold the true spirit of piety, of honour, and exalted principle; and if Heaven in its mercy restore the victim of a *too conscientious* adherence to a *rash* vow, once more to her recollection and intellects, you will glory, my dear Edward, in owning and defending such a sister; she will rise doubly in public estimation, like *virgin gold*, purified from the dross of calumnious misrepresentation, and silence at once the tongues of the envious detractors of such exalted and uncommon endowments of mind and person.”

The brother, who had attentively listened to this minute detail, now exclaimed, clasping fervently his hands, “ My poor wronged, afflicted, persecuted Mary! What hast thou not endured from a too rigid observance of thy rash vow! and yet the world

is scarcely to be blamed, for appearances were so unfortunately corroborated by her being seen in company with the late Lord Henry Augustus in the *coach*, and again seen with him by Mr. Day one of the proprietors, who sent her back her articles ; every thing tended to prove a connexion between them : but the dying declaration and the bequest in his will of 1000*l.* to her and me, for the wrongs he had occasioned, has cleared her fame in the eyes of the public ; and *your* explanation has fully established her innocence in *my* eyes. It has done more : it has exalted her as a being of uncommon and seraphic mind ; who, from a religious attention to an oath, made at the most awful crisis, disregarded her own reputation, and reflected not on the ultimate consequences ; compared with the violation of the sacred pledge she had given ! Oh ! Mrs. Forester ! oh ! Mr. Percy ! my venerated friend ! I may lay her present derangement at *my* door ; for, unknowing she had been recently so *much* afflicted with a nervous disorder, from which she had but just recovered, and prejudiced against her by such strong reports, I drank more freely than usual, and went to the theatre, to behold her perform ; my mind

agitated and in a state of additional fermentation, could not stomach the insulting language of a young nobleman, still more inebriated than myself, whom I had every reason to suppose my sister's seducer. The fatal consequences are known, he scarcely wounded me, but he fell by the hand of Colonel Emerson, whom he had upbraided with his *sister's* disgrace: however, he has expiated his offence, and cleared Mary's character. We must now, my friends, endeavour all in our power, to recover her from this unhappy malady. I fear, I much fear, if ever possible, it will be the work of time. I saw her yesterday; she did not know me! Oh! my beloved friends! heart-rending was the sight!"

"Come, Edward," said his reverend friend, "indulge not in this despondence and self-upbraiding; both are useless. We come prepared to view our beloved suffering young friend, under the most lamentable of human afflictions, with minds fortified by a firm reliance on the all-wise Disposer of events, who can as suddenly *strike*, and as suddenly *restore*, as seemeth best in his unerring judgment. To *Him* let us address our supplications, and, surely, the pious pe-

titions of his humble creatures in behalf of suffering innocence, never ascended to the mercy-seat of the *Omnipotent* in vain! Kneel then with me, my friends, and let us, with contrite hearts, and a due acknowledgment of the weakness of all human intellect, humbly implore from His ineffable goodness, a return of that *bright ray*, which so pre-eminently distinguishes *man* from the rest of the creation!"

They immediately obeyed the pious summons; and, with souls duly humbled, at the *imbecility* and *fragility* of all human endowments, addressed the Throne of Grace.

We make no comment on this solemn scene: to the *sceptic*, and *irreligious*, it would be unavailing; but we are old-fashioned enough to believe, with our forefathers, that *prayer* is an *acceptable* oblation; for as the experience of ages has proved a *general*, so has a *special* providence been evidently felt and acknowledged by those supplicants, who, in the hour of sore affliction, have applied for succour to their Heavenly Father.

The Major staid with his worthy friends, till near one in the morning; at parting, he said he would call on them about ten next day,

but would previously enquire how his sister had passed the night, for on that depended whether she would be sufficiently composed to admit of being seen.

The old nurse, who now constantly slept in a closet within her Mistress's chamber, was up betimes, and perceiving her still continue in a heavy tranquil sleep, silently got breakfast ready, and waited with an anxious mind for her waking, which was generally preceded with one or two heavy sighs, and a few incoherent expressions. About eight o'clock this morning, she drew back her bed-curtains, and perceiving the sun shining, cried out, very audibly, " Bless me ! I have strangely overslept myself. Ann ! Ann ! where are you ! "

" Here, my dear Mistress," cried the old woman overjoyed. " Do you want me ? "

" What hour is it ? " asked Mary. " I am sure by the sun it must be late. "

" It has just struck *eight*," said Ann. " I was loth to disturb you, you were in such a sweet sleep. "

" I have been dreaming of I know not what. Pray was there a quarrel in the boxes last night ? "

The nurse paused, and then recollected.

“ Oh! yes, my dear Miss; there was a rum-pus between that troublesome Lord Harry or Henry, who was tipsey; and another gentleman, but it is all over now.”

“ As I live,” cried Mary, “ I saw him, and heard my brother Edward’s voice, and I have been dreaming of their fighting, and that my poor Edward was killed; but I hope it is all a dream.”

“ Nothing more, I portest and vow,” cried Ann, almost beside herself with joy; “ but sure enough you saw Master Edward, my dear; he came last night to the play-house, but could not see you, for you was so busy in your part; but he gave me his picture to present to you, and left word he would call to see you this morning.”

“ Indeed! his picture! What is he then really come from abroad? and has he *called* on me? Oh dear, Ann! I am so happy; then he has forgiven my going on the stage?”

“ Aye! to be sure he has,” answered Ann. “ ’Twas only a bit of airs and soldierly pride belike. I knew my sweet young Master Edward could not stand out against his darling sister Mary. Why you took his picture from me last night when you came home; and put it in your bosom along with

your mother's, and look, sure enough, there it is, in the bed with you."

Mary now took it up and kissed it fervently. "It is indeed his likeness, and a very strong one too. So, he said he would call this morning? Well, Ann, I will rise and breakfast, and then after breakfast I'll dress myself and wait for him; so I can't attend rehearsal this morning."

"No, no, my dear," cried the old nurse, "you are not wanting, you exerted yourself too much last night, and were quite fatigued. You were wrong to leave the farmhouse so soon, before you were sufficiently strong, but you must be more cautious for the future."

Mary confessed she felt a lassitude about her, and unusually weak; but she had no recollection of the dreadful malady that had so suddenly left her, and it was the business of every person to keep that knowledge from her. She now relished her breakfast and ate heartily, and to the infinite joy and surprise of Ann, asked her about the nurse and child.

Now the truth was, that this infant was lying ill of the measles, and not expected to live. Ann had regularly sent the guinea a-week



to Margaret, who always informed her by her husband John, the Major's servant, how the child went on. At present, however, the little one was so dangerously ill, that Dr. Lancet declared a few days must terminate his life. This gentlemen was called in, the former Doctor from his loquacity having lost his business, and left the town.

The old woman, fearful that this news would distress Mary, was at a loss what to say ; and her mistress was obliged to repeat the question.

" Tell me, Ann, how is the poor infant ? By your looks," said Mary, " I fear something has happened. Tell me the truth ; is it dead ?"

" Lord, no, my dear mistress ; why should you think so ?"

" I am sure," replied Mary, " it would be a happy thing for the unfortunate babe, and for *me*, if it were released from this troublesome world. I have known nothing but sorrow, since it was born."

" Indeed," returned Ann, " I believe a very few days will send the poor baby to Heaven ; for the Doctor says, the measles has struck in again, and he can't force them out."

“ Heaven’s will be done !” sighed Mary: “ I shall never shed a tear on its account. I have performed my duty, the sacred duty I pledged myself to fulfil; more than my duty, I have found to my loss. I shall now *re-joice*, and not repine.”

Mary now, with the assistance of her old faithful domestic, dressed herself, and when she looked in the glass, she exclaimed, “ Good Heaven ! how pale and thin I seem ; but it is always so, when I lie too long in bed of a morning. You were very wrong, Ann, to let me indulge in so shameful and lazy a practice ; you know it don’t agree with me.”

“ Well, well,” cried Ann, “ you’ll soon get fat and jolly, and pick up again. When we get you back to the farm, to the nice hot milk from the cow, you’ll grow as plump as a partridge, I warrant. But Master Edward is now a Major it seems, and the sight of him will put new life into you. And may I never stir, if I don’t think I am grown twenty years younger at the thoughts of how happy we shall all be together.”

Mary now walked about her room ; her strength was evidently much improved, and, with the assistance of Ann, she went into

Mr. Dunn's garden for half an hour. It greatly refreshed her, for now she did not find it too powerful. When she returned to her room, she looked at her father's portrait, which hung there, then at her mother's miniature, and then at her brother's; the sight of these dear resemblances cheered her spirits, and she waited calmly the arrival of the Major.

As soon as he came, which was before ten, the old nurse met him at the door, and threw herself into his arms, sobbing aloud. "Gracious God!" exclaimed Edward, trembling. "Speak, woman! how, how is——"

"Oh joy! joy! dear master, joy! I cannot speak; she is, your dear sister is come quite to herself, quite, quite; she knows *me*, knows every body, recollects every thing; but don't suppose she has been so beside herself. No, no; she thinks she has had a long dream. But she knows your picture; and I have told her you are come to town; and she is now up, and impatient to see you. Oh! you will be so delighted. She is now perfectly in her senses."

"Patience," cried the Major: "this is indeed a sudden and most joyful surprise. I must run back immediately to apprise Mr.

Percy and Mrs. Forester with this happy and unexpected news. They arrived post last night, and are now at breakfast with me and the Colonel at our lodgings."

"Oh! goodness be gracious to me!" exclaimed Ann: "this is delightful news! I'll run and tell her directly."

"Hold," replied the brother; "don't you think the sudden surprise will be too much for her?"

"Not at all, not at all," said Ann; "she is quite cool and collected, I assure you. I'll break their arrival to her first, and then in about half an hour you may all come, but you must not hint any thing about, (saving your presence,) being out of her poor mind."

"Not for the world," cried the brother; "we should be stark mad ourselves to drop the smallest word on that delicate and distressing subject." And away the delighted Major darted back like lightning, to acquaint his friends.

The old confidant returned to her mistress with a countenance full of importance. "Well, I portest and vow," she cried, "*Ill* luck nor *good* luck, I thinks, never comes single-hand. What would you give the two

eyes in your head for, is come to pass ; and what you never dreamt of ; I'll be sworn."

"What, good Ann?" asked Mary. "Something pleasant, by the broad grin on your face."

"As I live and breathe, Parson Percy and Mrs. Forester are come to town here, and your brother, and they will be with you before, as Mr. Dunn says, you can say *par-snips*. Aye, by my truly, I never was so pleased in all my born days, ould as I am ; not when I got the fifty pound prize in the lottery. I am almost tipsy for joy, I believe ; and if ever I got merry in my life, it shall be to-day, in drinking health and happiness to you all when you meet."

"You surprise me, my good old woman," returned Mary ; "but it is indeed an *agreeable surprise*. This will be the happiest day I have seen for years in thus meeting all together ; and I promise you a whole pint of wine after dinner to drink their welcome. But what shall we do to lodge them, Ann?"

"I'll speak to Mrs. Dunn ; she is a good soul, and I know she has got a spare bed and can suit the good lady : and for the Parson, your brother must provide for him."

“What can bring them so far from home, Ann?”

“I can’t say, by my truly,” said Ann; “but marry whip me, Miss Mary, but here they come; did not you hear them knock?” And down went the old woman, as fast as she could hobble, to let them in. The poor old soul welcomed their presence with many a low curtsy, and kissed both their hands. Mrs. Dunn ushered them into her best parlour; when Ann hobbled up stairs followed by the brother, who was soon fast in the embrace of a beloved sister.

The pencil of the ablest artist could not efficiently pourtray the lively joy that animated both their countenances. The long separation, the delight poor Mary felt in being so tenderly taken to the bosom of an affectionate brother, who by his conduct proved he had pardoned her choice of the theatric profession, was so powerful, that it nearly overcame her, but she soon revived; and the Major’s transport was no less ardent, in beholding her so suddenly restored to her former recollection and sanity of mind, which, the day before, he had almost despaired of. He then ventured to mention her friends below stairs, whom Mary had forgot

in the joy of meeting her long absent brother ; she then desired her brother to conduct them up, and went to the stairs to meet them as they ascended.

The tears that filled the eyes of her second parents, for such they might be truly denominated, as they pressed her emaciated form to their hearts, were those of joy and sorrow ; grief at the ravages that cruel distemper of the brain had caused in her lovely person, and unspeakable delight in finding her so unexpectedly restored to pristine sanity of intellect. The pious divine ejaculated a silent thanksgiving to the Fountain of Mercy, who had heard his prayer ; and old Ann was literally ground twenty years younger, such an effect had this happy change and meeting on this faithful creature.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

POOR Mary's heart bounded with transport at the sight of these long-trying and inestimable friends. She looked and re-looked, after the first pressure of their warm embrace; gazed again and again upon her brother, so long and ardently, that they began to tremble lest a relapse should close the scene of all their hopes. To call her attention, Mrs. Forester mentioned the death of her aunt Gordon. "I remember," replied Mary, "when last I saw her, I did not expect that she could long survive. Pray, Mrs. Forester, how is my worthy friend, Nathan Barclay, the quaker?"

"I saw him," said her amiable friend, "but two days before we set off; he was well in health, as stiff, as formal, but as friendly as ever; he enquired after your welfare. "How is that fair maiden, *Mary*, the daughter of my deceased friend Irwin? When hast thou heard from her?" I told him "I was going a long journey, and should take ——— in my way, and pay you a



visit.” “ Present my respects when thou seest her : peradventure I shall call on her myself shortly, if thou inform me of the place of the damsel’s abode ; as I want to pay the interest of her monies now in my hands.” I told him, “ it would be sufficient if he would let me know where he put up, and I then would wait upon him, and *you* should call on him.” “ Umph !” replied he ; “ I usually tarry at the *inn* known by the head of *George*, and I shall be glad to see the maiden there.” Mrs. Mildmay begs to be affectionately remembered to you.”

“ Ah !” cried our heroine, “ why have I forgot to enquire after that most amiable and worthy friend ; the woman next to yourself, dear Madam, I most honour and regard : and her worthy, honest-hearted brother, old Captain Mildmay ?”

Perfectly satisfied that her intellects had gained their former strength and stability, they chatted on various subjects, still with a view to ascertain the powers of her mind, and if she had regained their full possession. Of this they were soon convinced ; when the brother proposed calling a coach, to take Mary a morning’s jaunt for the benefit of the country air. Mary agreed to it, and she

said she should like to call at the farm where she had lately resided. "No, my dear," said Mrs. Forester, "I think we had better pay a visit to the *nurse* and *child*."

Mary looked at her friend, and then at her brother. "Come, come, my dear Mary," said the Major, "why so secret? I know you have a *child* with you, that—"

"It is not *mine*," said Mary, colouring; "it is the offspring of a deceased *friend*."

"What friend, Mary! I must know, or—"

"Or you will accuse me of being *mother* to the infant! I can't help it; you are not the *only* one who still censures me; but I *must not, cannot, dare not* tell you, of all men."

"Why not?" asked Edward.

Mary paused. "Because you are my *brother*, and I am solemnly bound."

"Edward, Edward," cried Mrs. Forester, "you are very impertinently inquisitive and provoking; and I assure you, you shan't know more concerning it than you do at present."

"I know sufficient to glory in a sister," returned the Major, "who could, to preserve the reputation of a deceased one, the unfortunate Hester, and the inviolability of

a sacred promise, suffer her own fair fame to be blasted by a misjudging and censorious world." And he advanced, and pressed her again to his heart.

The coach was now called, and Mary, her brother, Mrs. Forester, and Mr. Percy set out in it for E——, to Shuttleworth's, the weaver's, where Margaret, with the child, was.

The poor infant had expired about ten minutes before the coach stopped at the weaver's door. Margaret, of course, was in sad tribulation. When they beheld the corpse of the little sufferer, Mary stooped and kissed its pallid cheek, and then cried, "Farewell, poor babe! the child of shame and sorrow! May the memory of thy unfortunate and deluded mother's fault be forever buried with thee in the grave!"

"Come, my dear," said Mr. Percy, "let me lead you from this dismal scene; death is at all times awful; and to remain here **may** affect your spirits. Heaven's will is accomplished, and you are released from your heavy obligation."

"I *am*," returned our heroine calmly; "and I am happy that Heaven hath so willed it: I feel a load taken from my aching

heart, and now breathe light and free. Do you, brother, give necessary orders for its interment, and we will see it laid peaceably in the ground." Then giving Margaret some money, and thanking her for her long trouble and patience, Mary, with her brother and friends, returned to the coach, and proceeded in their morning's ride.

Mary, during their jaunt, found the air exhilarate her strength and spirits, and the death of this infant, so far from depressing her, seemed to relumine her eyes, and re-animate her whole frame. She begged her brother would, on her return home, wait on Mr. Day, with her written apology for not attending rehearsal, stating the arrival of her brother and friends, &c. This, to satisfy her, the Major promised to do.

When they came back to Mr. Dunn's, Mary penned the note, which she gave to her brother, who said he would deliver it immediately ; and requested Mrs. Forester and Mr. Percy would accompany him, as their presence would confirm the truth of her apology. To this they assented ; and Mary said she would, in the interim, order dinner to be ready at four o'clock, it being then past one.

“ I have a request to make, my dear sister, that you put yourself to no expence on our account ; and that you will permit me to invite a most particular friend of mine, and not unknown to you.”

“ Whom do you mean ?” enquired his sister.

“ Major, now *Colonel Emerson*.” Mary blushed. “ Will you permit him to dine with us ? we are fellow-travellers and fellow-lodgers.”

“ As my brother’s *friend*, and as a gentleman for whom I entertain the truest *esteem* ; in *that* light, but in no *other*, I shall be happy to see him. You are, and so is *he*, already acquainted with my *decided* sentiments : you understand me ?”

“ *Perfectly*,” replied the Major : “ in no other light do I at present wish you to behold each other.”

The Major and friends now left Mary and old Ann together to cater for dinner. The old woman, eager to show her cleverness, said, “ Let me manage for a cook this time ; I’ll turn my back to none of your young ones any day, for sending up a clean joint, roast or boiled, or for a pudding or a pie, by my truly. I have seen what a good table was in

your honoured father and mother's life-time, and helped the cook, many's the time and oft ; so, saving your presence, I'll get a nice fore-quarter of lamb and spinage, a couple of boiled fowls, some bacon, and a hundred of grass, a dish of nice fried soles ; and for a gooseberry pie, let me alone for that ; I believe you shall say, *Hannah Glass* was a fool to me."

" I'll trust to your management, Ann," said her mistress, " and tell Mrs. Dunn I shall be glad to speak with her."

Down went old nurse, full of bustle and business, and Mrs. Dunn presently waited upon Mary. That worthy and attentive woman had been indefatigable in her assiduities, during her fair lodger's severe malady, and was overjoyed at her sudden and almost miraculous recovery, which honest Dunn attributed to his superior skill in *specifics* ; and perhaps, not improbably, her extraordinary restoration may be, in some degree, indebted to him : his wife, however, cautioned him to be careful, when he next saw her, not to mention a syllable of her late disorder, which caution he faithfully promised to observe.

“What are your commands, Miss Irwin?” asked Mrs. Dunn as she entered.

“My brother, Major Irwin, and a few friends are to dine with me to-day, Madam, and I shall thank you, if you can oblige me with a few additional plates, knives, and forks.”

“Most undoubtedly,” returned the good-natured woman; “you shall have my best set of china plates, my silver forks and hafted knives, my silver tankard, and every necessary appendage for the occasion; and my husband has opened his binn, and laid out half a dozen of choice Madeira and red port, and you may depend upon the quality. Mr. Dunn intends to drink your health himself, and your return from the farm.”

“He is very obliging, and so are you, Madam. I hope I put you to no inconveniences.”

“None in the least, my dear young lady. I am happy I can accommodate you so readily: you have only to touch the bell, and I shall be ready to attend your call.” Mrs. Dunn then retired.

On the way to the proprietor's, the Major informed the divine and Mrs. Forester, of her articles being sent back and cancelled, on account

of the seeming confirmation of those injurious reports ; “ but now that my sister’s character has been cleared by the late Lord Henry Augustus’s dying declaration, signed with his own hand, and duly witnessed ; nothing now remains, but to explain the mystery of the *child’s birth*, which you both can safely attest ; we shall then hear what he says ; and though I by no means wish her return to the stage, the knowledge of her dismissal, and the occasion of it, might injure her feelings, and discompose her mind, which must be carefully avoided.”

They enquired and soon found Mr. Day’s residence, who was luckily at home. The Major briefly stated the occasion of his visit, and referred the proprietor to the reverend gentleman, and to the lady who accompanied him, for a proper elucidation with respect to the child.

Mr. Percy then explained. Mrs. Forester added every necessary circumstance. The appearance of such highly respectable personages, the venerable aspect of the pious divine, who was particularly explicit in his vindication of our poor Heroine, had the desired effect.

Mr. Day now in the most polite and



friendly manner thanked them for this necessary information ; that he was exceedingly happy to hear she was so fortunately restored to health, and assured them that he and his partners would most willingly renew her articles for three years at an *advanced* salary ; that he would announce to the public the pleasing intelligence, to prepare them for her re-appearance, and was ready to insert her name, as soon as her health and strength would permit her to resume the exercise of those talents so much admired, the loss of which had been so severely felt and regretted ; nay more, he would immediately write to inform the Viscountess Armsfield of the happy explanation, in justice to Miss Irwin's character, and her ladyship's strong recommendation.

Mr. Day then in the most elegant manner, presented the brother of Mary and her two friends with the freedom of his theatre, during their stay, which compliment they politely accepted, and returning this gentleman their thanks for his conduct on this occasion, wished him a good morning, and retired then to the Major's lodgings, in order to inform Colonel Emerson of Mary's felicity.

citous re-establishment in health and reputation ; which that worthy officer heard with the most visible emotion ; for the involuntary tear of delight glistened in his expressive eyes, and his voice even faltered in declaring the pleasure he felt at the intelligence they had just communicated.

“ Aye ! Colonel ; and another piece of news for you, is,” said the Major, “ I am come to bring you along with us, for we are all to dine with my sister.”

“ Will not my presence be thought intrusion ?” said the Colonel. “ Consider, I am comparatively a stranger.”

“ You are to dine with her, at her express approbation, and she expects you.”

“ Still I am apprehensive my appearance may prove a restraint, and distress her ; you comprehend me ?”

“ That depends entirely on yourself.”

“ If so, I will venture. Have with you then.”

The party now proceeded to Mary’s residence, it being near three o’clock, where our Heroine anxiously awaited their arrival.

Mary received the Colonel with a smile, and with far less embarrassment than the

poor man himself experienced ; such an effect had the sudden recovery of a beloved object upon his otherwise firm nerves.

We shall now leave for a little time, the happy party over their plain yet social entertainment, and just meet Counsellor Forrester and his servant as they alighted at the King's Head Inn.

We need not paint the countenance of that estimable young man ; his pallid cheek, his sunken eye, marked too strongly the bodily fatigue he had lately undergone in a route of nearly four hundred miles ; but that was a trifle compared to the agonizing conflict, which deprived him of all necessary repose of mind. We may judge what that conflict was, a virtuous and enlightened character had fixed his pure affections,—affections of no ordinary stamp,—upon an object with whom reason, congeniality of sentiments and principles had given him every assurance of permanent happiness in such an union ; now to find, as he fearfully expected, his apprehensions confirmed ; that he had bestowed his noble and exalted soul on a deceitful and all-seductive *wanton*, wounded his pride, and called his intellects and

discernment in question. Again, pity on the other hand for her unhappy derangement, which his rooted partiality would fain attribute to her sensibility and repentance, wholly unmanned him, and he in secret wept like a child, and with Othello frequently exclaimed

“ If *she* be false,

“ Oh, then Heaven mocks itself : I'll not believe it.”

In this state of mental perturbation, we shall follow him into an apartment at the King's Head ; when the attentive Mrs. Bustler perceiving a strange gentleman, apparently much harrassed and fatigued enter, left her bar, and personally waited on him to know his commands.

He ordered her to prepare a bason of gravy soup first ; he then would lie down for an hour, as he had travelled for seven days successively, and had come fifty miles on horseback that morning. He begged to be called at five o'clock, and to have a veal cutlet ready for him by that hour ; and after he had dined, he would be glad to ask her a few questions. He was shown up stairs, where, when he had swallowed his bason of soup, he lay down to rest his wearied limbs,

and to endeavour to compose his mind, to demand the necessary information; for *sleep* he could not.

According to his desire, he was called at five o'clock: having washed, and changed his clothes, he sat down to his dinner; and though he had come such a ride, he ate but sparingly, his mind being filled with the business that brought him, and which now occupied his sole attention.

The cloth being removed, and the wine set, he took a few glasses, and requested the waiter to send his mistress. Mrs. Bustler instantly obeyed the summons.

“Your inn, Madam, seems to be remarkably well frequented; a constant succession, and variety of guests.”

“Persons of all ranks and descriptions necessarily pass and repass through this large and populous town, Sir; and though I have a hotel for private families, they seldom tarry here longer than a week; they prefer private lodgings to being near such an extensive concern, full of noise and hurry.”

“Did any travellers of note put up here lately?” asked the Barrister.

“ A great many, Sir ; but they never stay long in town. There were two military gentlemen of rank, with their servants, came to my house some weeks back, staid a few nights, then took lodgings, and, I believe, are still in town. They went at first by the fictitious names of Colonel Thomason and Major Edwards. They saw no company, mixed with none of the military here, and there were, of course, flying reports not much to their credit.”

“ As how, pray, Madam, if it is not a secret ?”

“ Oh ! ’tis now no secret ; they have caused talk enough in the town, I assure you. There has been duelling and murder since their arrival. Lord Henry Augustus of the hussars, has lost his life through their means : he was a nice young nobleman, but I believe a very vicious character ; so it is reported. But the Colonel shot him, though he lingered several weeks in great agony. His Lordship fought first with the Major.”

“ What with *both* ?” said the Counsellor ; “ that was rather too hard on his Lordship. How came the quarrel ? An old affair of honour, I suppose.”

“ I really do not know, Sir ; but I believe it began at our theatre here, about one of our actresses.”

“ Ah !” exclaimed Forester, impatiently ; “ these actresses are a sad set ! they set all the men by the ears, through their arts and intrigues.”

“ You are no friend to the theatre, Sir, or you would not say so. There are good and bad in all professions ; and, for my part, I never wish to see a more prudent, regular, discreet body of people, than those belonging to the theatre. And as for the young lady they fought about, you never saw so sweet, so interesting a girl in your life, I will venture to say ; and for acting, none of your London ladies can compare with her. Poor soul ! she has gone raving mad since the death of her lover.”

“ Lover !” sighed the Barrister ; and he took a glass of wine to conceal his emotion.

The Major has now proved to be her brother ; his name Irwin, Major Irwin ; and the other gentleman, who killed his Lordship, Colonel Emerson. The brother, it is supposed, thought his Lordship had seduced his sister. But on his death-bed he declared his innocence and cleared her fame. To be

sure, she brought a young child and nurse with her, which looked very suspicious, though she assured me, the infant is her nephew. But the town will have it otherwise; although the dying man confessed he had brought the quarrel on himself; and as a proof, forgave his antagonist, and left the brother and sister one thousand pounds each in his will. But, poor thing! what is all the money in the world, when she is out of her mind, and can't enjoy it?"

"Very, very true!" sighed the now wretched young Barrister. "These officers are still in town, you think?"

"Oh, yes!" returned Mrs. Butler; "they are seen every day arm in arm, and are now generally taken great notice of. They are both as fine handsome men as ever you beheld, Sir. There was an old silver-headed clergyman and an elderly lady arrived but the night before last, I think, enquiring for the Major's lodgings. I directed them there, and he supped with them both *here* last night."

"The very persons, Madam, I wish to see; the lady in particular."

"I believe, Sir, you will find them at Mr. Larkins's house, where these officers



lodge. My waiter shall show you the way, when you think proper." Mrs. Bustler then with a curtsey retired.

Counsellor Forester finished his wine in silent despair, paced the room with agitated steps, and then rang the bell for some coffee. When he had taken two cups, he called the waiter to conduct him to Mr. Larkins's.

Having knocked at the door, he asked if Major Irwin or Colonel Emerson were at home. The servant answered, "*No*; they were gone out about three to dinner, and had not returned." Mrs. Larkins now came to the door. "The gentlemen went in company with an old clergyman and a lady, Sir. I believe, you will find them at a Mr. Dunn's, in ——— Street, where Miss Irwin lodges."

"Is not that young lady ill?" asked Mr. Forester.

"Oh! Sir, very bad indeed! quite out of her senses. But they are very close about it; and, I believe, as my husband says and thinks, they are now about sending the poor lost creature off to a mad-house."

The Barrister now, almost mad himself at this sad news, hastily left the house, and made the best haste to Mr. Dunn's, where

he arrived, more dead than alive. He knocked, and old Ann opened the door.

"Is a lady called Forester here?" he asked quickly.

"Aye to be sure she is, Sir," said Ann. "Do you want her?"

"I must speak with her immediately," cried he.

"Marry whip me, but you can't though," returned the old woman; "she is in company with my mistress and the gentlemen, above stairs."

"Who is your mistress, old woman?" enquired the Counsellor.

"Miss Irwin. They all dined with her to-day, and we are all so happy and merry."

"*Merry! happy!* a pretty time for merriment. You are raving, woman, and as much out of your senses as your mistress; and if what you say be true, the whole company must have caught the infection."

"Not half so mad as yourself, I thinks; an you come for to go that," said Ann, sharply. "You looks quite crazed yourself, I portest and vow. But my dear mistress is up, and well, and in her sober senses, and that's more nor you be's, by my truly; so I shan' disturb them for you, I assure you."

“Heaven and earth ! woman, don’t trifle with me ; I shall go distracted. I tell you, I’ll not leave the house, till I see Mrs. Forester.”

Mrs. Dunn, hearing the altercation, came from her parlour. “Walk in, Sir, and be seated ; the old woman is a little confused, I fancy ; her mistress has had a few friends to dinner. It has been a happy day, Sir, and the old nurse is beside herself for *joy*.”

“*Joy !*” exclaimed the almost petrified Barrister ; “*joy*, at such a time ! *Joy* at such a cruel, deplorable affliction ! Good God ! Madam, surely you jest ; and if so, I must say, it is most unseasonable and insensible, and most unjustifiable pleasantry.”

Mrs. Dunn, perceiving the visible distress of mind depicted in his speaking countenance, requested his name ; but Mr. Forester declined to give it, and only said, “Call Mrs. Forester apart, and let her know her *nephew* is arrived ; her nephew, Madam. But break it gently to her, for it will surprise her.”

“I shall obey, Sir ;” said Mrs. Dunn, as she left the parlour.

Mr. Dunn now came from the inside room, where he was sitting over a bottle and his

pipe ; and it was evident he had taken sufficient.

“ Your sarvant, Sir,” cried Dunn. “ My name is Dunn, Doctor Dunn, at your sarvice. By the powers, I can do more than all the physicians in this big town. I cures the melancholics and the spleen, and here is my elixir ;” on which he returned with a goblet full of Madeira. “ Come, Sir, drink and welcome. You look troubled with the blue devils ; and this will drive them away, before you can say parsnips.”

“ Prithee, man, be quiet,” exclaimed Forester, walking about, quite vexed ;—“ don’t, pray don’t *teaze* me.”

“ Don’t *bother* you, you mean. Well, no offence, Sir, I hope. I only meant friendship, nothing more ; but you may go farther, and fare worse. Only, if you are out of your senses any day, send for Doctor Dunn : I’ll cure you, agraph ! A goblet of this, and one of my Irish songs, will set your brain to rights, in a jiffy.”

“ The man is *mad*, I think ; *all mad*.”

“ Hush ! hush !” cried the honest landlord ; “ not a word on that tender point. If I am not, I know who was. But, *mum* for that.”

Footsteps were now heard coming down stairs ; and presently the door was opened. “ William ! ” exclaimed the Aunt ; “ William Forester ! I can scarcely credit my eyesight and my senses. What miracle has brought you here ? ”

“ I can scarcely credit my own sight and senses,” returned her nephew ; “ for every thing I have beheld and heard since my few hours’ arrival, seems a palpable contradiction. What phrenzy, what epidemic insanity, possesses this house !—I am truly shocked.”

“ Come, my dear William, be composed. I guess your errand. And if you patiently await my explanation, most readily will I ease your agitated mind. You come to enquire after Mary ? ”

“ I do, my dear aunt ; that is the sole cause of my journey. From the cruel reports I have heard, and now confirmed in some respects, since my arrival, you know not how I am torn with doubt and anxiety ; nor can I account for the seeming levity of your present behaviour.”

Mrs. Forester now entered into a full detail of the mystery of the *nurse* and *child*,

and fully satisfied her nephew's mind on that important and interesting point. She explained the various persecutions she had undergone, from the vain coxcomb to the persevering and designing libertine ; how gloriously she *resisted all temptation* ; till, tortured with slanderous and unfeeling calumny, and the sudden arrival of a brother, who, she thought, came also prejudiced against her ;—the quarrel and duel that followed ;—the false report of her brother's being killed ;—all threw her, who had just recovered from a nervous fever, occasioned by over study and exertion, into a state of mental distraction, from which she had but the day before suddenly and miraculously recovered. “ She knows not, my dear William, of her recent affliction ; nor is it fit she should. Her case, for many weeks, was hopeless ; but Providence has heard our prayers, and she is now restored to her former recollection and serenity. Rejoice with me, William, at this happy change. Stay here for a few minutes, and I will break your arrival to her. I know she loves you with a pure and ardent passion, but she does not suppose you entertain the same tender

sentiments towards her. I will introduce you to her brother, the worthy and reverend Mr. Percy, and a Colonel Emerson."

"I know him," said the nephew. "I recovered a small property for him lately, in right of his mother."

"Come, be cheerful; you look quite harrassed and weary," said Mrs. Forester, looking tenderly at him.

"It is my mind, my dear aunt, that has suffered; but this intelligence and explanation has thrown a mountain from my heart. I can take a glass of Mr. Dunn's wine now; but I fear I have offended him."

"So you shall, William." She then called Mr. Dunn. "My nephew, Counselor Forester, will thank you for a glass of your wine, Sir."

"Faith, and the gentleman shall have it, with all the veins of my heart," said Dunn. "Och! 'tis the finest cordial for lowness of spirits, next to *currant whiskey*, of any in the known world. I have christened it *Doctor Dunn's restorative elixir*."

The honest Hibernian brought the goblet full, which he presented to Mr. Forester, with a bow; while the aunt ran up stairs to announce her nephew.

Mary felt her heart palpitate, and her cheeks glow, at the mention of his name. Her fine eyes sparkled with delight, and her confusion did not pass unobserved by her brother and the Colonel, the latter of whom heaved an inward and involuntary sigh. Young Forester's whole countenance was evidently re-animated, and as he ascended the stairs with his aunt, his feelings were no longer those of despair; but tender transport and returning hope, wrought an instantaneous and happy alteration in his person, to that woe-worn figure he exhibited, as he knocked at the door of the house which contained the object of all his solicitude, and who, his heart plainly whispered, was become indispensable to his future happiness, if not ultimately to his very existence: so deeply had her lovely image, and the perfections of her upright mind, been engraven on his intelligent, discerning, and susceptible bosom.

As he advanced to take our Heroine's hand, whose agitation increased at the sudden appearance of the only man who had ever made an impression on her heart, and whom she secretly idolized, he faltered out an awkward apology for his intrusion;



but business having brought him through this town, he could not resist stopping and paying his respects. And he declared his gratification received a peculiar addition in beholding his aunt at the same time, whom circumstances had prevented him from visiting for several years. Mary then introduced him to her brother, and Mrs. Forester also presented Mr. Percy to his *personal* acquaintance, whom the Counsellor said he had long known by *character*, and had frequently coveted the present felicitous interview. Then turning to Colonel Emerson, "You must excuse me, Colonel, for not noticing you before; but these are friends whom *absence* has endeared, and *we* have seen each other *recently*."

"Make no apology, Counsellor; but I must again publicly return you my thanks for your recovery of my little property."

"Say no more," said the Counsellor; "would it had been a thousand instead of a hundred per annum, no one more truly deserves it."

The conversation now became general. The theatre was mentioned. Mr. Forester's MS. tragedy, and other occurrences, occupied them, till the Colonel, judging these

relatives might have some private business, rose to depart. Mary wished him a good evening, and hoped, while he staid, he would occasionally call with her brother.

Colonel Emerson bowed, and took his leave.

“No !” ejaculated he sorrowfully, as he proceeded home. “I must not repeat my visit. Adieu, loveliest of thy sex ! thy heart is, I see, otherwise engaged ; and poor Emerson is doomed a bachelor for life.”

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

MARY had spoken to Mr. Dunn to provide an apartment for Mrs. Forester, and Mr. Percy was consigned to the Major's care, who most readily undertook to see him properly accommodated ; as to Counsellor Forester, he kept his apartments at the inn where he put up, but was seldom there ; he spent his hours by far more agreeably with his aunt and our heroine, who, now she was surrounded by those near and dear friends, the only beings whose affections were necessary to constitute her happiness, rapidly regained her bodily strength, while the powers of her mind seemed to have revived, and acquired additional acumen and energy.

She now rode out every morning in a carriage, accompanied by Mrs. Forester and her nephew constantly, and frequently by her brother on horseback. Mr. Percy was likewise a regular attendant on these pleasurable excursions. Mr. Day in the most polite and friendly manner now personally

waited on her, saying, “ he was exceedingly rejoiced at the visible improvement of her health ; and, as she rode out every fine day, he had a most gentle grey pad at her service, which the most timid might securely mount, and he strongly recommended that salutary exercise.” Mary, however, declined his kind offer, with her sincere thanks for his marked attention ; and assured him she was ready to re-appear, whenever her services were required.

To this the proprietor made answer, “ He would announce her appearance in due form ; but as benefits would shortly commence, he advised her to postpone her appearance till her *own night*, which he would take care should be the first, and apart from the rest ; for as her night would decidedly cause an *overflow*, it was but justice to the other performers to have *hers* over, to prevent clashing of interests, by which the next would inevitably suffer.” In this Mary perfectly agreed and the proprietor took his leave.

An advertisement next day appeared in the provincial paper, which was couched in the following manner :—

“ We feel particularly happy in acquainting the public, that Miss Irwin’s health is per-

fectly re-established, and that her *conduct*, which has so ungenerously suffered from injurious misrepresentation and too hasty conclusions, is now cleared in the fullest manner by the most incontrovertible proofs, to the entire satisfaction of the proprietors, and all friends to injured innocence; that her next appearance will be for her *own benefit*, of which due notice will be given; when, it is presumed, that the admirers of such conspicuous talents and *real* worth, will unanimously support a young lady, whose health has been so materially injured under *ungenerous* and *unfounded calumny*."

The sight of this paragraph was an additional cordial to the heart of Mary; and Dunn himself when he read it, declared the writer a very able doctor, who could pen so comfortable a prescription, which could not fail to take effect.

Mary resolved to pass a fortnight at the farm, to enjoy the salubrity of the vernal season, now luxuriantly teeming with its usual fragrance, before her benefit was announced. Mrs. Forester and old Ann moved thither at the same time.

The Major and Counsellor Forester now became intimate friends and companions,

and were constantly together. The more the brother of Mary beheld and conversed with him, the more he was charmed with his society ; for he had more frequent opportunities to cultivate a closer intimacy since the departure of Colonel Emerson, who candidly confessed his attachment, but, at the same time, manfully declared before the Barrister, that he renounced all pretensions and hopes, since he could plainly perceive that Miss Irwin had long bestowed her affections upon a gentleman, whom he was proud to call his friend, and whose estimable qualities must have fixed the heart of a woman of far less discernment than the Major's amiable sister. He candidly owned his determination to remain a bachelor, for he despaired of ever meeting a woman capable of exciting an honourable attachment ; as every object, however fair, must fail in comparison with Miss Irwin. That, in his opinion, he renounced the sex ; that the *arms* he should in future consign himself to, should be those of *hardy steel*.

In this honest declaration he persisted, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his friends ; he penned a short letter to our Heroine, resigning his pretensions in favour of a man so much every way his superior, and

wished them permanent felicity ; and when the Major would have prevailed on him to take a parting farewell, “ No, my dear Edward,” cried he, “ you must excuse me. I am pretty *tough*, I confess, but you ask too much. I leave it to our friend Forester, who has a fellow feeling for me, if you are not an unconscionable fellow ; and so *bye* to you both. Heaven bless you, Forester, in the arms of—— Farewel Venus ! welcome Mars !” and this noble minded and excellent officer, after promising to correspond, clapped spurs to his horse, and was presently out of sight.

He remained but a few days in England, to adjust his domestic concerns ; and in a fortnight the Major received a letter from Dover, stating that he should embark upon his return to the army the following day.

“ That’s a noble-hearted fellow,” said Irwin to Forester, as he finished reading the Colonel’s letter, “ and truly worthy of my sister. I strongly advocated his cause with Mary, but to no purpose. *You* appeared, and *lawyer-like*, laid your *attachment* on the citadel, her *heart*, from whence it was impossible to dislodge, or in your phrase, *eject* you : so the Colonel wisely raised the siege.”

“ And can you blame me ?” said the Barrister. “ Your sister’s attractions were irresistible, and the superiority of her mental endowments, was the real magnet that drew my affections towards her.”

“ I am very happy,” returned the brother of Mary, “ that you are the object of her choice, the nephew of her most particular friend : that circumstance, be assured, was not a trifle in your favour, and I will do you the justice to say, your own merits accomplished the rest.”

“ Come, let’s to the farm, Major,” said Forester, “ and inform Mary of the Colonel’s arrival on the continent ; by this time, most probably, he has reached head-quarters. I know she will be pleased to hear of him; for it is impossible for her not to esteem him.”

They mounted their horses, and took a circuitous ride, and arrived half an hour before dinner, about two o’clock, for Mary dined earlier in the country.

Mary had often expressed to Mrs. Forester her surprise at her nephew’s stay. “ Surely, my dear Madam,” she said, “ *business* brought him through——, and he called on me on his way ; but what can detain him so long ?”



“ I fancy,” returned her friend smiling, “ it is *you* who detain him ; he waits, perhaps, to see you perform at your benefit.”

“ *No, no,*” said Mary, colouring and shaking her head, “ it is not that, for he has seen me frequently perform ; so *that* cannot detain him.”

“ Cannot you guess then ?” said Mrs. Forester. “ You are tolerably sagacious in other respects, but appear amazingly dull at present, which is somewhat uncommon, when William Forester is the subject.”

The blood now crimsoned the face and neck of our heroine, while she stammered out, “ I am sure I am very, very happy to see him ; but I should be sorry to cause an interruption to his professional pursuits.”

“ Oh then, my dear, I’ll tell him so,” answered the worthy lady ; “ which is as much as to say, you wish him *gone*. William is very touchy ; he will immediately take the hint, and be off : he’ll not trouble you with his presence in haste.”

“ How provoking and teasing you are, Madam ;” cried Mary. “ You misunderstand me ; I do not wish him gone, you know I don’t ; far from it, but—”

“ But,” cried Mrs. Forester, “ like a true

daughter of our sex, your curiosity is roused to know the cause of his stay : then I must explain. You must be informed then, that this counsellor, this barrister, this eloquent pleader in the cause of others, is, when he would wish to plead his own, the veriest ass that ever brayed ; for he has been at last compelled to solicit a poor weak woman to advocate his suit. You are the judge, he says, who is to pronounce the awful sentence of life or death upon him." He begs you will not, in your cruel mercy, respite him from session to session, but at once decide his fate."

" I scarcely comprehend you, Mrs. Forester," said Mary, with an agitated voice.

" In plain English," said her friend, " is the poor man to *hang* himself ? or will you take the noose from his neck, and twisting it into a *true lover's knot*, bind yourselves together in the *matrimonial noose* ? *Speak ! pronounce !*"

" Bless me !" exclaimed poor Mary, in a glow of confusion ; " you take my breath from me ; how can I decide so suddenly ?"

" Consult your own heart," answered Mrs. Forester.

" That will take time," returned Mary.

“ *His* fate I could quickly pronounce ; but when my *own* is involved at the same time, I must be deliberate ?”

“ Nay,” replied her good friend, “ when a woman once *deliberates* where her *heart* is concerned, she is *lost*, and the man is sure to triumph. So, child, you may save yourself the trouble of *reply*. *I’ll* answer for you, and bid the poor wretch live.”

“ You take advantage of the easiness of my disposition, and *expect* my compliance ; and to say the truth, I have suffered so severely from being obstinately deaf to the advice of my best friends, that I am resolved in future to abide by *their* opinion.”

“ Which, at present, fortunately coincides with your own ; eh, my dear Mary ?”

“ Were I to deny it, you would lay it to *affectation*, which I detest ; so, my dear Madam, let my brother, yourself, and the kind Mr. Percy decide for me ; and I promise an implicit obedience.” And just as she had given her hand to Mrs. Forester, in confirmation, her brother and the Counsellor entered the apartment.

“ Here, William Forester,” cried his aunt, “ you are just arrived in the very nick ; take this hand from me : she had intended it for

you, and I was only your poor representative." The enraptured lover seized her trembling hand, and pressed it to his lips; her whole frame became agitated with tumultuous sensations, which the delighted Barrister immediately perceived, and, in a transport of joy, caught her to his bosom.

"Hey-day!" exclaimed the Major: "so closely engaged already, good folks? I think you might have the modesty to wait till Mr. Percy had given his sanction to these strange proceedings: however, I'll let him know your impatience, and I dare say he will take compassion on your truly deplorable condition."

And here our young readers may be disappointed in not beholding *Cupids, darts, flames, showers of tears, profusion of vows and sighs, ardent gazes, coy looks, turtle doves, &c.* and the whole artillery and machinery attendant upon Hymen's altar. We wish to pay every deference and regard to the beautiful and sublime passion of love, but really we have now no room for such extensive apparatus, that belong exclusively to the romantic and enthusiastic votaries of the blind urchin.

The love that filled the bosoms of our He-

roine and the chosen partner of her heart, was not founded upon appetite, nor soared into regions of ideal super-excellence : it was the offspring of admiration and esteem, of congeniality of sentiment and feeling, of rectitude of principle, and exquisite sensibility, all uniting in two persons, whose bodily endowments presented a fair estimate of the worth that resided therein : nothing romantic nor enthusiastic marked the progress of their pure affections. A diffidence ever inseparable from true love, withheld Mr. Forrester from pouring forth the ardent breathings of his soul, and *compelled* him to seek the intercession of his aunt ; while a passion, no less pure and ardent, informed Mary, that *candour* stamped the sincerity of attachment, and required her not to *trifle* with her own happiness, and that of the tenderest and worthiest of men. She, therefore, scorned to keep him in suspense ; and all his doubts and fears vanished in the chaste embrace.

“ What have you both done with *my* old sweetheart, Mr. Percy ? ” asked Mrs. Forrester. “ Mary, I perceive, does not think our little circle complete without his presence.”

“Neither do I,” said the Major; “and particularly as things are drawing near a conclusion. However, he has some letters to write to apologize for his long absence; he will be with us to-morrow.”

The fortnight passed merrily over, for time flies upon eagle’s wings between happy and expectant lovers; and Mary now returned to town to prepare for her benefit night.

She chose the tragedy of “*The Gamester*.” Mrs. Beverley was one of her happiest parts; and as Mrs. Forester and Mr. Percy had never yet had an opportunity of seeing her display her abilities, all their ideas of her powers fell short of their surprise, at the wonderful energy of her talents, that struck them mute with admiration. The fulness of the house made her doubly exert herself; and her reception, after so long an absence, and what had passed, was rapturous in the extreme, and most truly gratifying to her friends present.

“Well, Mr. Major,” cried Mrs. Forester, “you have now witnessed the rapturous applause that accompanies *theatric* merit. What profession teems with so much? or in what line of life could Mary’s abilities be so eminently distinguished?”

“ True,” replied the brother : “ the stage may be compared to a *rose tree*, full of *sweets* and *thorns*. Now I should, were I a lady, sacrifice my vanity to my repose, and be content with a less conspicuous station ; *where*, if I did not inhale so many sweets, I might hope to escape the thorns strewed more in the public path of the stage, than in any other line. My vanity should not get the better of my delicacy ; for let what will be said of the talents required, and the respect paid by the liberal-minded and discerning to merit ; yet, for a woman to bring herself to appear, and expose her person, to a crowded assemblage of all ranks, bespeaks a *masculine* assurance, inconsistent with the *female* character, with which the post of *honour* should ever, in my opinion, be a *private* station.”

“ Then how could plays be performed,” asked Mr. Forester, “ if you exclude actresses ?”

“ Formerly, Sir, the world thought as I do, and *boys* were substituted.”

“ Most awkward and inadequate substitutes, indeed !” exclaimed the Barrister.

“ Really, this brother of yours, Mary, has no

feeling whatever for the *feelings* of a *poet*. What would become of *me*, and of my *tragedy*, were a great lubberly, blubbering *boy* to personate my Heroine? whose conceptions are too crude, whose gait and gesture, passions, taste, and sensibility, all must be discordant with the feelings of the sex. No, believe me, none but a *woman* can personate the sensations of a *female*, and not every woman neither. Many can feel, but very few properly exhibit the various emotions by which the sex are agitated. Strong powers of mind and expression, a graceful person, polished manners, the result of cultivation, are indispensable requisites to constitute an actress; and when we meet such a happy combination of talent, is not the possessor far more worthy our respect, if her private conduct be not censurable, than the hundreds of *insipid, half-educated, frivolous, and disdainful females* we are forced from politeness to compliment, at the expence of our understandings! Should not an intelligent man be proud to cultivate and covet the society of such a woman? And if their hearts accorded, should he, from a mistaken pride and false shame, be afraid to avow an ho-



nourable attachment to such a meritorious object, because she is an *actress*? Forbid it, common sense and justice!”

“ My dear fellow,” answered the Major, “ all this is mighty fine, and mighty pathetic; but it is an artful justification of your *own* conduct, in selecting my sister as the object of your choice. Tell me now, honestly, before our friends, Mrs. Forester and Mr. Percy, would not you much rather Mary had *never* trod the stage, than hear it circulated that Counsellor Forester is married to an *actress*?”

“ No, by no means. I should never have known half her *worth*, half her inestimable qualifications and endowments, had she remained an obscure and private character. No profession that a woman can adopt so conspicuously displays her endowments; and if she *preserve* her character through such temptations, does she not literally *command* our esteem and admiration? Well may those ladies boast whose virtue was never assailed; yet those charitable and immaculate characters might withhold their censure, and not indiscriminately confound the worthy with the undeserving, by branding

the profession at large with their contemptuous asperity."

"I don't suppose," said the Major, "that you intend my sister should follow this noble profession you so much admire, when she is become your *wife*?"

"I confess I do *not*," returned the Barrister.

"I knew it," cried Irwin; "I knew it. You will bring her up to town, get her an engagement, and when her abilities have stamped your new tragedy, you will then condescend to give her your hand, and immediately take her off the stage: for *why*? because you would *blush* to have your wife an *actress*?"

"You mistake me, Edward," replied Forester; "it is because I am truly *independent*. I have an estate above six hundred pounds per annum, besides expectancies, and I have made these three years past, by my profession as a Barrister, nearly twelve hundred a year more. I should be inexcusable then to suffer my wife to earn a public subsistence, however lucrative or respectable: I might well be accused of *avarice* then."

"Yet there is something still in the life

of a player," said the Major, "that hurts my feelings, and appears degrading. What think *you*, my reverend Sir?"

"I confess," said Mr. Percy, "that the stage still labours under a stigma very uncharitably attached to it; and its professors are by no means treated in general, with the respect so liberal an art demands; for it is an art transcendently eminent, and, in my opinion, surpasses painting and sculpture. I will adduce one proof of my observation, and the unfortunate disrepute it is held in. Not very many years since a young gentleman, a curate, married a young lady, who brought him a very trifling sum, which was expended with economy in furnishing a small house. His stipend was but 45*l.* a year. As his wife brought him a child every year, he set up a school in the village, as *she* did; but all their united efforts could not keep the foul fiend, *Poverty*, from entering their homely dwelling. It happened this lady possessed an uncommon brilliant talent for the *stage*. After many arguments, she prevailed on her reluctant husband to let her try her abilities at a neighbouring *provincial theatre royal*. Her attempt succeeded beyond their most sanguine expectations;

she was engaged at the *best* salary, and her benefit overflowed the house. Now mark the consequences : the Rector heard of it, and apprised the Bishop of the Diocese, who, thunderstruck and alarmed at this seeming *degradation* of the Church, threatened to suspend the poor curate, unless he instantly made his wife quit the *infamous* pursuit. In vain the poor man urged, that the pressing wants of eight small children compelled his wife to such a step. Nothing could palliate the disgrace, but her immediate relinquishment ; or the *loss* of his *gown*. He found that *no* economy could preserve his large family, but that his debts hourly accumulated while he continued a *curate*. He therefore quitted the *pulpit*, and mounted the *stage*, where the joint abilities of himself, wife, and eldest daughter, gain yearly four hundred pounds ; whereas, his curacy and every extra means never reached eighty pounds per annum. This worthy man and his amiable family are universally respected in their present profession by all but the *clerical* function and their adherents, who have long denounced him as a *reprobate*, and an indelible stain to the cloth. So much for charitable prejudice !”

“If my opinion may have any weight,” said Mrs. Forester, “I think there is no occasion or necessity now for Mary to accept a *London* engagement, and then relinquish it on her marriage; unless indeed William’s *tragedy* depends on *her* sole exertions.”

“Which I by no means have the presumption or vanity to suppose,” said Mary. “I have read it, and am confident its *own* intrinsic merit is a sufficient surety for its success; nor can he be at a loss for a most able representative of his *Heroine*, if he send it to *Covent Garden Theatre*, where the conspicuous talents of a most amiable young lady, not more justly admired in public, than she is esteemed for her private virtues, will add *celebrity* to the character. I therefore must decline the undertaking, for I will on no account hazard an ineffectual competition, with an actress of such acknowledged and *established* reputation.”

Previous to their union, which was now fixed for that day month, Mr. Forester arranged his affairs, and settled three hundred pounds a year on Mary in case of his demise; he wrote likewise to his relation Sir William Rosebury, apprising him of his

approaching nuptials with our Heroine, whose character had been fully cleared and vindicated in Mr. Day's last letter to the Viscountess. The worthy Baronet, in return, congratulated him upon an alliance with a young lady so truly amiable and deserving, and hoped they would pass a couple of months at the Park, where he and Lady Rosebury would anxiously expect them.

About this time Mary received a long and friendly letter from the late Miss Thompson, now Mrs. Concord, informing her of her recent marriage with her old admirer. That they were now settled in Bath, and kept a very respectable music-shop; that she continued on the stage, and her husband attended the orchestra, and gave lessons abroad; that her mother was still living, and well: in short, that they were in the high road of doing well. "But," added this worthy-hearted and agreeable woman, "As matrimony is a lottery at best, I am compelled, my dear girl, to take the bad with the good, and so I balance the account. My husband is a very *dark* man, but possesses a very *fair* character. He has an *ugly* face, but a *handsome* person. He has a *cross-looking*, *sour* countenance, being much

pock-marked ; but his temper is *sweet*, and he is the soul of *good-humour*. He is not overburdened with money ; but he has abilities, industry, economy, and perseverance to acquire it."

As Mr. Percy's departure drew near, he apprised Mary and her brother of his intention ; but the Major expressed his wish to accompany him and Mrs. Forester back to their respective habitations, and once more to revisit the place of his youthful happy days, and the graves of his honoured parents ; that his sister, and her affianced, must accompany them, where, at the village church of his esteemed and revered tutor, he would be happy to bestow his beloved Mary's hand on the man of her heart and of his warm approbation ; there their venerable friend could join their hands in his own church ; and confer his benediction, when the blessed spirits of their parents would behold the deed, and sanction the holy transfer.

To this most welcome proposal, Mary and her lover instantly agreed. Our Heroine now packed up her things ; took leave of the proprietors, and Mr. Day in particular, who congratulated her on the approaching change in her condition ; and in three

days this happy party and their attendants left ——— to return to the place of Mary's nativity, where they safely arrived after a very pleasant and agreeable journey.

The marriage was soon after solemnized, in the presence of their friends, Mrs. Mildmay being particularly invited. Mary now received her thousand pounds, bequeathed her by the late Lord Henry Augustus, and being likewise possessed of her three hundred and fifty pounds in the hands of the worthy Nathan Barclay, she gave fifty pounds to Mr. Percy, to distribute among the deserving poor of the parish. Mr. Forester at the same time followed his lady's benevolent example.

This happy couple having passed the honey-moon among the scenes of Mary's earliest days, which recalled many tender sensations to her sensitive mind, prepared to set out for London; where the Barrister proposed taking a furnished house at the west end of the town; their revered and affectionate friends at parting, assured them, they would make their house their residence, whenever business called them to the metropolis, and Mrs. Forester promised to spend three months every winter with them.



Mr. and Mrs. Forester, the Major, with old Ann, who had now obtained an asylum for life with her young mistress, then set forward, and soon reached the capital, and in less than a week this amiable pair were fixed in their new habitation.

Passing through Piccadilly a few weeks after, in company with her husband and brother, Mary was suddenly shocked at beholding the countenance of, no longer the proud and disdainful, but the *pallid*, and *woe-worn* Miss Emerson ! The unhappy woman trembled, and would have avoided her, but the compassionate Mary, forgetting in her respect and esteem for the Colonel, the faults of his sister, kindly accosted her.

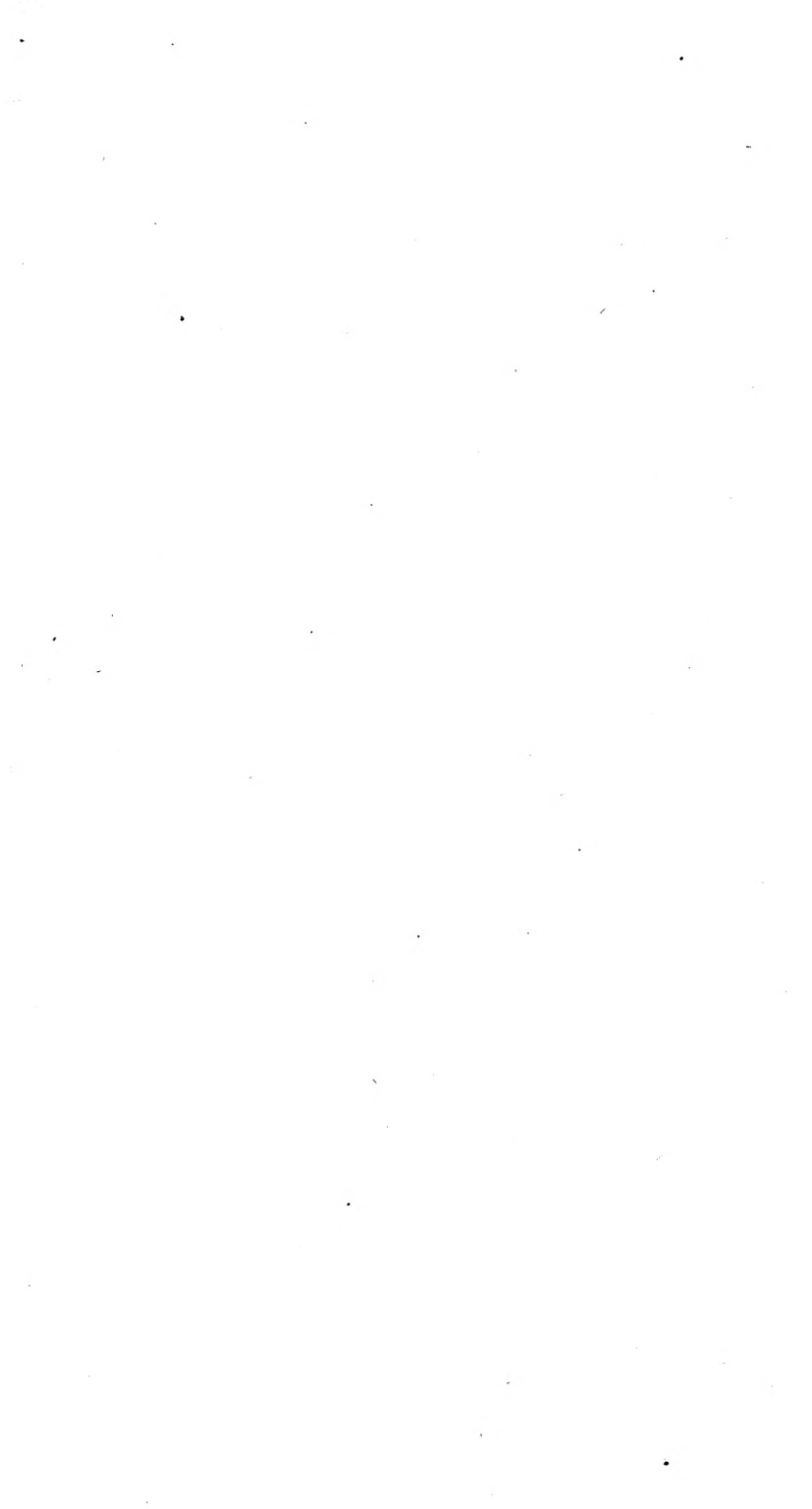
Mary briefly learned that Sir George Dashington had cruelly deserted her, that he had eloped with the wife of the Honourable William Neville, who had imprudently wedded a French lady of fashion ; that the silly and half-distracted young man, had followed them to France ; and that she was left in the most deplorable situation.

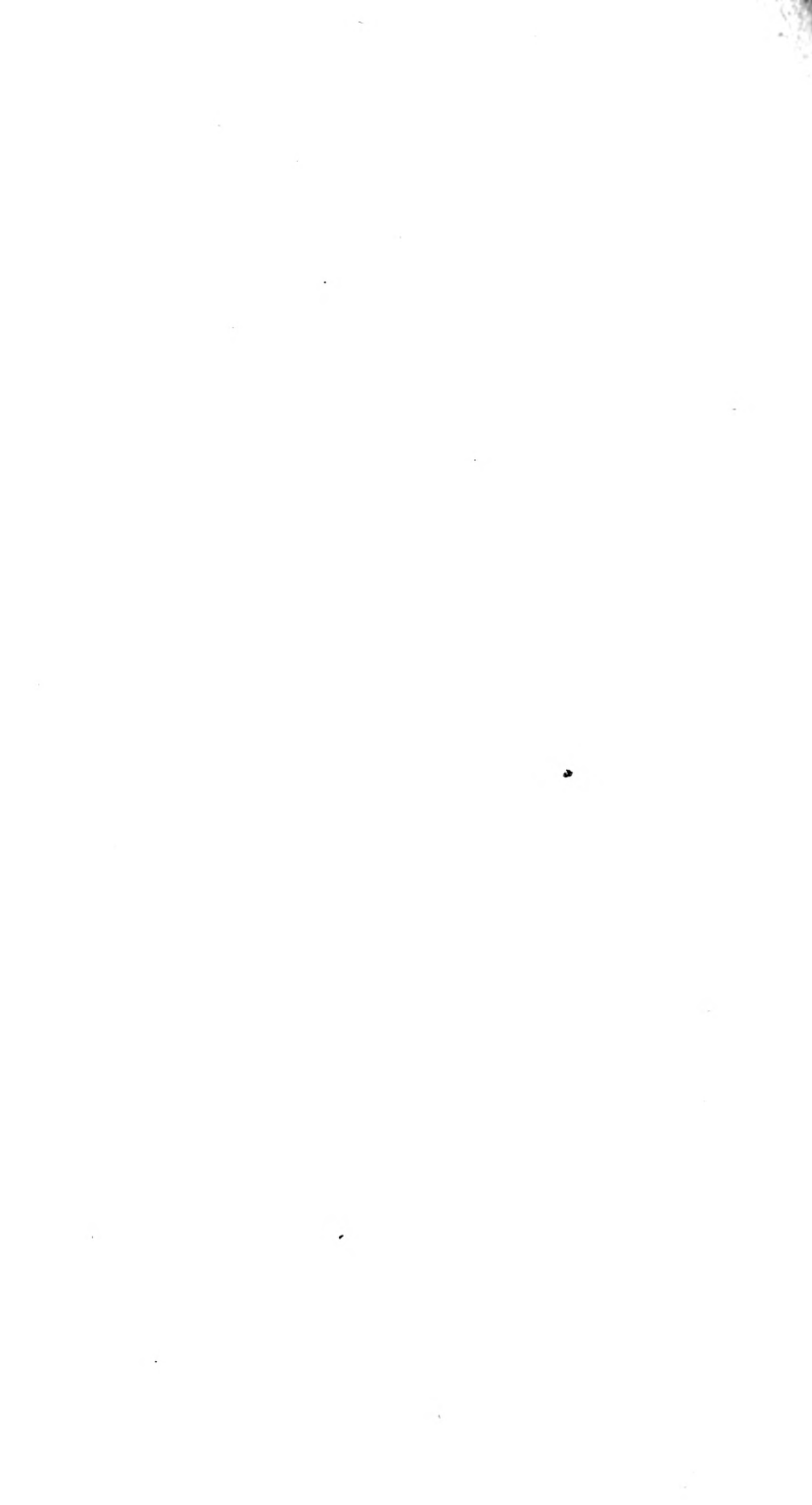
Mary's feeling heart bled at this recital of misery ; she gave her a present supply ; took her address, and promised to intercede with the Colonel to allow her a sufficient main-

teinance, now she had seen and repented of her error. Our Heroine informed her brother, who, that very post, wrote to his friend the Colonel, relative to his unhappy sister.

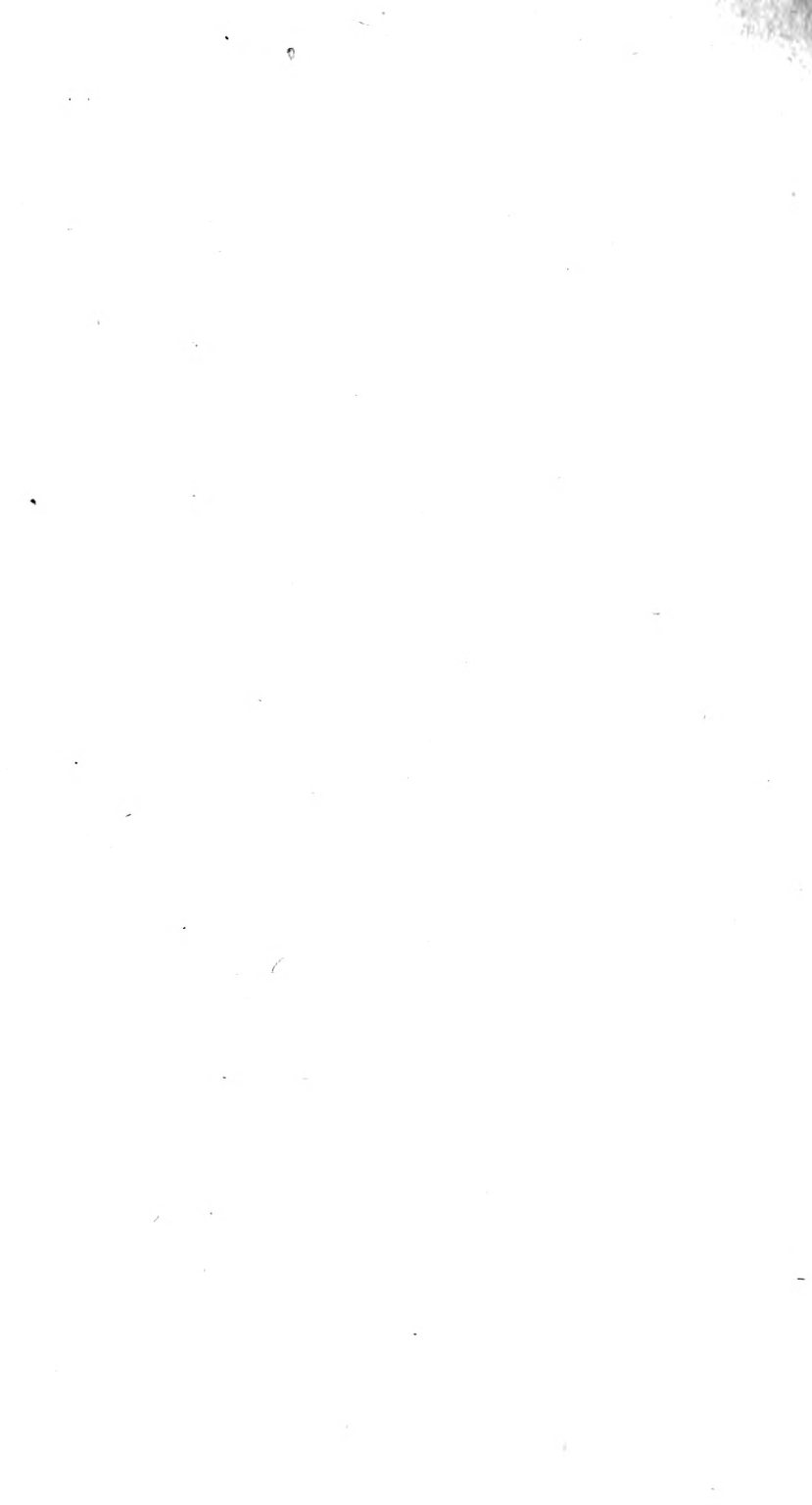
Previous to Mr. Forester and his wife spending the long vacation with Sir William and Lady Rosebury, Mary selected all her stage dresses and ornaments, and sent them off to Bath, to her friend the late Miss Thompson, begging her acceptance, as she had now no further use for them. Having mentioned her present happiness, she concludes her letter, "accept these trifles, as a mark of my unalterable esteem and friendship. May your marriage ever prove in unison with your *name* ! May your present *duet* speedily become a *trio*, and in time extend even to a *sestetto*, if Heaven so will it ! that the prattle of your innocents, may add to your domestic *harmony* ! for myself, the only characters I in future wish to fill, or in which I am emulous to excel, are those of *friend, sister, wife, and mother* !"

THE END.











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